

# How to Add Fruit and Veggies to Your Diet

When you stop to take stock on the quantity of fruits and vegetables you eat every day you may be dismayed at how far you have to go to reach a target of those daily 5-9 servings. The average American only eats 2-3 servings. So, if you eat more than that, you are way ahead of the curve and don't have too far to go. But, even if you are average, it's a lot easier than you think to add those extra servings.

## Baby Steps

Don't try to do it all at once. Too many changes to your diet will result in plenty of backsliding. Start by substituting fruit for dessert. Do that for a few days, or weeks. Next, try eliminating that bag of chips, or muffin, for a fruit or veggie snack. Next, try adding a fruit or veggie to your morning routine. Later, add one for lunch and so on.

## Try Something New

Make it a point to look over DDF's "Fruit and Veggie" database and pick a new fruit or vegetable to try out each week. In addition to descriptions, information on how to select and other nutrition information, there are, also, photos (so you can recognize them). Check DDF's recipe section to get an idea, or two, to get you started cooking/or using the item.



## Keep Fresh or Dried Fruit on the Counter

If you keep all your fruits and vegetables in the crisper drawer or in the cupboard, it's a lot easier to push to the back of your mind. Keep fresh oranges, bananas and apples on the counter where they are handy and accessible. When you are looking for that snack it will make it easier to grab something healthy if it's in plain view. Likewise, a small snack-bag of dried fruits and nuts is a convenient and easy snack to grab on the run.

## Breakfast

Yep, breakfast really is the most important meal of the day. Multiple studies have shown that individuals who eat breakfast maintain a more constant weight level. There are a number of logical reasons for this. You actually kick start your metabolism each day when you eat breakfast. You use the bulk of your calories during the day (not at night), so this gives your body fuel to do the day's work. If you eat breakfast you are less likely to indulge in that mid-morning sweet craving, like a fattening coffee drink, muffin or pastry.

## Easy ways to add fruits and vegetables to your breakfast...

- ◆ Start the day with a fruit smoothie. A few handfuls of strawberries, blueberries, raspberries or blackberries added to your smoothie can add loads of antioxidants to your diet. Add a banana and you've nailed two servings of fruit and you haven't even made it out the door!
- ◆ A glass of juice. The 100% fruit juice kind NOT the high fructose corn syrup and food coloring kind!
- ◆ A handful of strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, or banana are a great addition to your morning cereal. Dried apricots, raisins, cranberries, currants, dates or figs are also a tasty addition.
- ◆ Add onions, bell peppers, mushrooms or tomatoes to your eggs whether scrambled or in an omelet.
- ◆ Top your eggs with fresh tomato salsa.
- ◆ A cup of berries added to your favorite pancake or waffle recipe.
- ◆ Mix a quick fruit salad – pick two or three fresh fruits and mix them together with a small handful of nuts for a high powered start to your day.
- ◆ A half of a grapefruit.
- ◆ A serving of fresh melon or cantaloupe.
- ◆ A banana.



## Mid-Morning and Mid-Afternoon Snacks

Fight off that urge to reach for a muffin, pastry, bag of chips or candy bar. Instead, reach for:

- ◆ An apple, orange, pear or banana (they come in their own convenient packaging), or a small bag of grapes, cherries or blueberries.
- ◆ A handful of dried fruit (cranberries, apricots, dried plums, pineapple, pears, raisins, dates, figs, currants, blueberries) are all great choices.
- ◆ Carrots, celery, cauliflower, broccoli, Chinese pea pods, green beans, bell peppers – washed and raw.
- ◆ Cup of yogurt with a handful of fruit.
- ◆ Celery filled with peanut butter (sprinkle on a few raisins for an added bonus).

## Lunch

A mixed green salad is an obvious choice – just be careful with the salad dressing, since the fat can add unnecessary calories to your diet. One cup of leafy greens counts as a serving. Other options include:

- ◆ Fruit salad – just a half cup counts as a serving.
- ◆ Add one or more of the following to your sandwich: lettuce, sprouts, tomato, cucumber or avocado – or just go all veggie!
- ◆ Have a vegetable based soup – the possibilities are endless: tomato, butternut squash, pumpkin, mushroom, vegetable (hot or cold as gazpacho), potato, onion, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, even carrot.
- ◆ In the summertime try a cold fruit-based soup – there are some great options for watermelon, strawberry, raspberry, nectarine and pear soups – refreshing.
- ◆ Have a glass of fruit or vegetable juice instead of soda.
- ◆ Have a piece of fruit for dessert, instead of a cookie or brownie.
- ◆ For a great addition to tuna salad try carrots, onions and/or celery, and top with fresh lettuce, spinach and/or avocado.
- ◆ For a great addition to chicken salad try one or more of the following: celery, apples, grapes, carrots or dried fruit (your choice). Then, finish with fresh lettuce, spinach and/or avocado.
- ◆ Have a baked potato with chives and a little yogurt. Other additions could include broccoli, spinach, or a little salsa.



## Dinner

- ◆ Serve a salad or vegetable-based soup, as an appetizer.
- ◆ Instead of serving one vegetable, serve two – think about what colors of the rainbow you've included in your diet that day. If you've eaten a lot from the red and blue category, add some yellow or orange and something green – sweet potatoes or squash and spinach, beans, or peas.
- ◆ Include onions, mushrooms, peas, spinach, summer squash or dried fruit to your whole grain dish.

- ◆ Add onions, summer squash, mushrooms, bell pepper, eggplant to spaghetti/tomato sauce and serve over pasta.
- ◆ Serve a slice of melon, pear or apples between courses or at the end of the meal.

## Dessert

Even dessert provides an opportunity to add servings of fruit to your diet.

- ◆ Gelatin with fruit.
- ◆ Yogurt with fruit topping.
- ◆ Crisps, Cobblers, and Pies (if you make them yourself you can control the amount of sugar in the recipe).
- ◆ Baked Pears or Apples.
- ◆ Grilled Pineapple, Peaches, Nectarines.
- ◆ Fruit topping over a small amount of ice cream or frozen yogurt.
- ◆ Fresh fruit.
- ◆ Oatmeal cookies with loads of dried fruit.

