



# 22 Quick & Easy Ways to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

Fact Sheet FS1079



## Cooperative Extension

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From 1991 to 2007, the "5 A Day for Better Health" campaign encouraged Americans to eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day to improve health and reduce risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, stroke, hypertension, overweight, heart disease and certain cancers. In March 2007, the "5 A Day" program became the National Fruit and Vegetable Program and launched an updated version of the popular fruit and vegetable initiative. Called "Fruits and Veggies...More Matters," this public health initiative replaces the familiar "5 A Day" tag.

The updated campaign recommends that consumers eat between 4 to 13 servings (2 to 6½ cups) of fruits and vegetables every day, depending on individual calorie needs. This updated message is consistent with the newest Dietary Guidelines for Americans, released in 2005, which also increased fruit and vegetable recommendations.

Although we need to eat more fruits and veggies, a recent study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine reports that, like similar studies during the last 20 years, we actually eat far fewer. In this latest study, researchers report that 89% of us failed to meet USDA recommendations for fruit and vegetables in 1999-2002. But...why?

While there is no one single answer, health professionals suggest that many of us simply don't know how to put these health recommendations into practice. We're cooking less, eating out more and are frequently eating on the run. What we need are the tools to make eating more fruits and vegetables quick, convenient and easy. Try these ideas to help you add more fruits and vegetables into your daily routine...quickly and easily.

## Shopping & Storage Strategies

- Choose fresh fruits and vegetables that keep well for a week or more: apples, grapefruit, oranges, artichokes, beets, cabbage, carrots, celery, kale, onions, parsnips, potatoes, squash and sweet potatoes.
- Look for produce that is locally grown. (In New Jersey, that's "Jersey Fresh.") Fruits and vegetables that are grown locally do not travel as long and are typically fresher and tastier than foods transported long distances.
- Shop with a friend in mind. Share a bunch of celery or a melon. Split a bag of peppers or apples. Sharing gives you variety without the waste.
- Buy frozen fruits and vegetables in bags, rather than boxes. You can use as much or as little as you want. Then, tie up the bag to preserve flavor and store what is left for another time.
- Store unused portions of fresh veggies (like peppers, onions, celery and mushrooms) in plastic freezer bags or small containers to use later in pastas or stir-fries.
- Mix leftover pasta with chopped vegetables and low-fat salad dressing for a tasty pasta salad.

## Mealtime Tips

- Stop by the salad bar at your local grocery store and make a nice salad with a variety of different fresh fruits and vegetables. You get variety without buying large amounts of many vegetables and fruits. And, you don't spend time cutting and chopping.

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- Buy extra salad and roll it in a whole wheat tortilla for lunch or the following day's dinner. For extra flavor, add beans, chicken or shredded cheese.
- Make a meal out of a spud. Top a baked potato with canned chili, beans and steamed broccoli, carrots or cauliflower. Serve with a fat-free sour cream or shredded cheese.
- Add some greens to your burger. Thaw a box of frozen chopped spinach; squeeze out the water. Add to ground beef or ground turkey and make your burgers more nutritious.

## Give Prepared Foods a Boost

- Lightly sauté fresh vegetables such as broccoli, onions, mushrooms, peppers, carrots and eggplant, and add to jarred pasta sauce. Serve over whole wheat pasta.
- Add vegetables and a single-serving can of tuna or leftover meat to pasta salad from your local market or deli.
- Perk up take-out or frozen pizza with pineapple, chopped tomatoes, mushrooms, peppers, broccoli, onions or other favorite vegetable.
- Pair pizza with a salad or steamed vegetables for a wholesome, healthy meal.
- Dress up quick-cooking brown rice or couscous with diced tomatoes, shredded carrots, raisins and pine nuts. Season with a splash of balsamic vinegar.
- Top frozen whole-grain waffles with peanut butter and fresh or frozen fruit.
- Add fresh, frozen or dried fruit to instant hot cereals like oatmeal and Cream of Wheat®.
- Like Mexican food? Warm canned fat-free or reduced fat refried beans in the micro wave. Add low-fat or non-fat cheese, vegetables and salsa, and roll mixture in a whole wheat tortilla.
- Add raisins or other dried fruit (dried cranberries or cherries work well), chopped walnuts and celery to prepackaged romaine salad. Top with reduced fat dressing.
- Create your own special soup. Add chopped vegetables to tomato, lentil, bean or chicken noodle soup.
- Pick up a fresh fruit cup at the local grocery store or convenience store. Pair it with low-fat or non-fat cheese and crackers, yogurt or cottage cheese for an on-the-go snack or meal.
- In a blender, combine yogurt, ice, milk and your favorite fruit (strawberries, bananas, pineapples, mangoes, blueberries or peaches) to create a tasty smoothie.

## Click Here for More Ideas

[www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov)

[www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org)

[www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu](http://www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu)

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## Apple Chicken Stir-Fry

This is a Fruits & Veggies – More Matters™ recipe. It meets the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's strict nutrition guidelines as a healthy recipe.

Prep time: 15 Minutes, Serves: 4  
Cups of Fruits & Vegetables per Serving: 1

### Ingredients:

1 pound cubed boneless, skinless, chicken breast  
½ cup onion, vertically sliced  
1 ¾ cups (3-4 medium) carrots, thinly sliced  
1 ½ teaspoon vegetable oil  
1 teaspoon dried basil, crushed  
1 cup fresh or frozen Chinese pea pods  
1 tablespoon water  
1 medium baking apple, cored & thinly sliced  
1 tablespoon oil  
2 cups cooked brown rice

- Stir-fry cubed chicken breast in 1 tablespoon vegetable oil in non-stick skillet until lightly browned and cooked.
- Remove from skillet
- Stir-fry onion, carrots, and basil in oil in same skillet until carrots are tender
- Stir in pea pods and water; stir-fry two minutes.
- Removed from heat; stir in apple
- Add chicken, serve hot over cooked rice.

### Nutritional Information per Serving

Calories: 330	Carbohydrates: 30g
Total Fat: 7.7 g	Cholesterol: 66mg
Saturated Fat: 1.1g	Dietary Fiber: 5g
Sodium: 117mg	Protein: 29g