

Creating Health & Nutrition Fact Sheets

Tip
Buy fresh vegetables in season. They cost less and are at peak flavor.

Most vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories. None have cholesterol. Eating a diet rich in vegetables as part of an overall healthful diet may reduce the risk of stroke and coronary artery diseases; diabetes; certain cancers (such as mouth, stomach, and colorectal cancer); weight gain by lowering overall calorie intake; and low bone mass, as vegetables contain many nutrients important to bone health, particularly the vitamin K found in green leafy vegetables.

In addition, potassium-rich vegetables may reduce the risk of devel-

oping kidney stones and may help decrease bone loss.

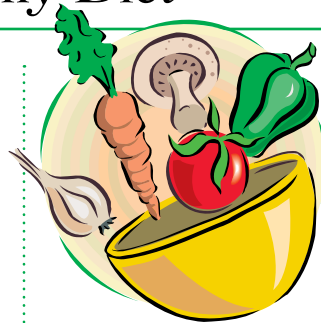
Higher potassium vegetables include sweet potatoes, white potatoes, white beans, tomato products (paste, sauce, and juice), beet greens, soybeans, lima beans, winter squash, spinach, lentils, kidney beans, and split peas.

Having adequate folate in your diet helps in heart health. Vegetables high in folate include beans, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, romaine lettuce, and tomato juice.

What Counts as a Vegetable?

Any vegetable or 100 percent vegetable juice counts as a member of the vegetable group.

Vegetables: The Cornerstone of a Healthy Diet



Vegetables count toward your daily intake in raw, frozen, canned, cooked, or dried/dehydrated form. Try them chopped, sliced, or mashed.

Vegetables are organized into five subgroups based on their nutrient content:

- dark green (e.g., broccoli and spinach)
- orange (e.g., carrots and squashes)
- starchy (e.g., potatoes)
- beans and peas
- "other" (e.g., green beans, beets)

It is important to select a variety of choices from each subgroup.

Tips Affecting Different Age Groups

How Many Vegetables Should I Eat Each Day?

The amount of vegetables you need to eat depends on your age, sex, and level of physical activity. In general, adults need 2½ to 3 cups of vegetables each day. School-age children need 1½ cups, and teens need 2½ to 3½ cups.

What Counts as a Cup?

In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens, can be considered 1 cup from the vegetable group.

Tips for Increasing Vegetable Intake

Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy microwave steaming. Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables in a see-

through container in the refrigerator. Carrot and celery sticks are traditional. Try broccoli, cucumber slices, or red or green pepper strips.

Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare. Pick up prewashed bags of salad greens and add baby carrots or grape tomatoes for a salad in minutes.

Plan some meals around a vegetable main dish, such as a stir-fry or soup. Add veggies to dishes you already prepare, such as casseroles or lasagna.

Prepared by Katherine A. French, extension educator, Mercer County.

Sources: www.ChooseMyPlate.gov; www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov; recipe from apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnp/recipe/recipe.aspx, accessed August 17, 2007

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Examine Your Choices

Food	What I do now	What I plan to buy/change
<i>Example:</i> Vegetables	Eat little variety, mostly potatoes or corn	Purchase fresh vegetables in season or frozen; try a new vegetable at lunch and dinner

My Goal:

Butternut and Ginger Soup

Serving size: one-sixth of recipe; cups of vegetables per person: one; preparation time: one hour

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tsp mild olive oil
- 1 ½ cups chopped onion
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tsp chopped fresh ginger
- 1 ½ lbs (6 cups) peeled raw butternut or other winter squash
- ½ lb (1 cup) new potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup unsweetened 100 percent apple juice
- 3 cups water
- ½ cup skim milk
- ½ sp salt

GARNISH

- ½ cup chopped Granny Smith apple
- 2 Tbsp chopped parsley

DIRECTIONS

Heat the oil in a high-sided skillet or large saucepan on medium high. Sauté the onions 3 minutes or until tender. Add the garlic and ginger and cook 1 minute longer. Add the squash, potatoes, 100 percent apple juice, and water or broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer 35 to 40 minutes or until very soft. Puree in a blender or processor, in batches, until smooth. Pour back into the pan and stir in the milk and salt. Reheat and serve topped with chopped apple and parsley.

NUTRITION INFORMATION

190 calories, 5 g protein, 1 g fat, 0 saturated fat, 45 g carbohydrate, 6 g fiber, 120 mg calcium, 3,200 mcg vitamin A, 16 mg vitamin C.