

## ***SEPTEMBER: FRUIT & VEGGIE MONTH***

### ***WHAT IS NATIONAL FRUIT & VEGGIE MONTH***

In March 2007, the National 5 A Day program became the National Fruit and Vegetable Program and launched a new public health initiative, Fruits & Veggies – More Matters. The new guidelines recommend two to six and a half cups of fruits and vegetables a day or the equivalent of four to 13 servings. In addition to this goal, the program seeks to inform everyone that eating fruits and vegetables can improve their health and reduce the risk of cancer and other diseases, including heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and macular degeneration.

### ***WHAT CAN EATING FRUITS & VEGGIES DO FOR US?***

It's essential to get a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables into your diet every day! Why? Because colorful fruits and vegetables provide the wide range of vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytochemicals your body uses to maintain good health and energy levels, protect against the effects of aging, and reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease.\* Phytochemicals are plant chemicals that may have health-related effects. However, they are not considered important nutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, and vitamins. Many of the phytochemicals and other compounds that make fruits and vegetables good for us also give them their color. It's important to sample the complete color spectrum every day to get the full health-promoting benefits of fruits and vegetables.

### ***MAKE COLORFUL FOOD CHOICES***

**BLUE/PURPLE** fruits and vegetables contain different amounts of health-promoting phytochemicals, such as **anthocyanins** and **phenolics**, currently being studied for their antioxidant and anti-aging benefits. Include BLUE/PURPLE in your low-fat diet to help maintain: a lower risk of some cancers\*, urinary tract health, memory function, and healthy aging. Get blue/purple every day with foods such as: blackberries, blueberries, black currants, dried plums, elderberries, purple figs, purple grapes, plums, raisins, purple asparagus, purple cabbage, purple carrots, eggplant, purple Belgian endive, purple peppers, and potatoes (purple-fleshed).

**GREEN** vegetables contain different amounts of phytochemicals such as **lutein** and **indoles**, which interest researchers because of their likely antioxidant, health-promoting benefits. Include GREEN in your low-fat diet to maintain: a lower risk of some cancers\*, vision health, and strong bones and teeth. Go green every day with fruits and vegetables like these: avocados, green apples, green grapes, honeydew melon, kiwifruit, limes, green pears, artichokes, arugula, asparagus, broccoflower, broccoli, broccoli rabe, brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, green beans, green cabbage, celery, Chayote squash, cucumbers, endive, leafy greens, leeks, lettuce, green onion, okra, peas, green pepper, sugar snap peas, spinach, watercress, and zucchini.

**WHITE, TAN & BROWN** fruits and vegetables contain different amounts of phytochemicals of interest to scientists. These include **allicin**, found in the garlic and onion family. The mineral **selenium**, found in mushrooms, is also the subject of research. Including WHITE in your low-fat diet helps maintain: heart health, cholesterol levels that are already healthy, and a lower risk of some cancers\*. Get all the health

benefits of white by including foods such as: bananas, brown pears, dates, white nectarines, white peaches, cauliflower, garlic, ginger, Jerusalem artichoke, jicama, kohlrabi, mushrooms, onions, parsnips, and potatoes (white–fleshed), shallots, turnips, white corn.

**YELLOW & ORANGE** fruits and vegetables contain different amounts of antioxidants such as **vitamin C**, as well as **carotenoids** and **bioflavonoids**, two types of phytochemicals that scientists are studying for their health-promoting potential. Including YELLOW/ORANGE in your low-fat diet helps maintain: a healthy heart, vision health, a healthy immune system, and a lower risk of some cancers\*. Choose yellow/orange fruits and vegetables like: yellow apples, apricots, cantaloupe, yellow figs, grapefruit, golden kiwifruit, lemon, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, yellow pears, persimmons, pineapples, tangerines, yellow watermelon, yellow beets, butternut squash, carrots, yellow peppers, yellow potatoes, pumpkin, rutabagas, yellow summer squash, sweet corn, sweet potatoes, yellow tomatoes, yellow winter squash.

Specific phytochemicals in the **RED** group that are being studied for their health-promoting properties include **lycopene** and **anthocyanins**. Include a variety of RED fruits and vegetables in your low-fat diet to help maintain: a healthy heart, memory function, a lower risk of some cancers\*, and urinary tract health. Include red fruits and vegetables in your diet such as: red apples, blood oranges, cherries, cranberries, red grapes, pink/red grapefruit, red pears, pomegranates, raspberries, strawberries, watermelon, beets, red peppers, radishes, radicchio, red onions, red potatoes, rhubarb, tomatoes.

*Note: \* Low-fat diets rich in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of some types of cancer, a disease associated with many factors.*

### **WAYS TO INCREASE FRUIT & VEGGIE INTAKE**

- Have a fruit or juice at breakfast daily.
- Have a fruit or vegetable snack each day.
- Stock up on dried, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables.
- Make fruit and vegetables visible in your home.
- Microwave vegetables for dinner.
- Grab an apple, orange, banana, pear, or other piece of portable fruit to eat on the go.
- Snack on raw veggies like baby carrots, pepper strips, broccoli, and celery.
- Pick up ready-made salads from the produce shelf for a quick salad anytime.
- Pile spinach leaves, tomatoes, peppers, and onions on your pizza.
- Add strawberries, blueberries, bananas, and other brightly colored fruits — fresh, frozen, or canned — to your waffles, pancakes, or toast.
- Stash bags of dried fruit in your car and at your desk for a convenient snack.
- Stir fresh or frozen vegetables into your pasta, noodles, or omelet.
- Whip up smoothies made from fresh or frozen berries, ice, and yogurt.
- Jazz up your soups or sauces with a can of kidney beans, peas, corn, or green beans.

### **HOW MANY FRUITS & VEGGIES TO EAT A DAY**

Visit the [Fruit and Vegetable Calculator](#). Here you can calculate your fruit and vegetable recommendations based on your calorie needs for your age, sex, and activity level. This site also has helpful tips and photographs of 1/2 cup and 1 cup fruit and vegetable examples.

Want to know the amount of each food group you need daily? Visit: [MyPlate Daily Food Plan](#) to find out and receive a customized Daily Food Plan.

***START THE MOMENTUM!!***

1. Take action to increase consumption of fruit and vegetables.
2. Ask a nutritionist or dietician to host a brown-bag seminar for your members or employees to discuss easy ways to get the recommended daily servings of fruit and vegetables.
3. Post information about one fruit or vegetable each day on your employee bulletin board with a quick and easy recipe to share.
4. Partner with your local farmers market to offer fruit and vegetables for sale at a discounted price.
5. Ask a local grocery store representative to present tips on how to save money when buying fruit and vegetables.
6. Conduct an onsite cooking demonstration using fruit and vegetable-inspired recipes.
7. Reach out to me for support in getting started. Call or email me and let's brainstorm together!

Resources:

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://cdc.gov/>) or the Produce for Better Health Foundation (<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/>) at [TEaton@pphfoundation.org](mailto:TEaton@pphfoundation.org) for more information and materials.