

Nutrition and MyPlate: Vegetables



Vegetables are a major source of fiber. They're also packed with vitamins needed for health and growth. At mealtimes, make half your plate fruits and vegetables.

Nutrient-rich choices

Fresh, frozen, or canned—all vegetables are high in nutrients: potassium, fiber, folate, vitamin A, and vitamin C. The color of the skin tells you what's inside. So if you eat plenty of colors, you get a variety of nutrients. Some good choices include:

- Dark green vegetables, such as spinach, collard greens, kale, and broccoli.
- Bright red and orange vegetables, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red bell peppers, and tomatoes.
- Starchy vegetables, such as potatoes and squash.

What makes vegetables less healthy?

- Boiling vegetables causes some vitamins and minerals to escape into the water. To hold on to nutrients, briefly steam, sauté, stir-fry, or microwave instead. Overcooking destroys nutrients, so try to keep vegetables a little crispy.
- Using a lot of margarine, butter, or salad dressing adds fat and calories, but not many nutrients. A small amount of these toppings is OK. But the more you add, the more fat you add, too.
- Frozen vegetables that come with cheese sauce or other processed flavoring are high in fat and salt. It's healthier to season plain frozen vegetables yourself. Try fresh herbs, garlic, toasted almonds, or sesame seeds.
- Canned vegetables often have lots of salt. Shop for low-sodium or no-salt-added varieties.

One small change

Sneak vegetables into every meal. Shred carrots into hamburger. Or add zucchini to spaghetti and meatballs. You won't even notice! Have a better idea? Write it here:

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