**Day 7 Fruit**

**Title: Fantastic Fruits**

Fruits in their natural state are low in fat and sodium and provide many important vitamins and minerals that help our bodies work at peak performance. Some of these vitamins and minerals include vitamin C, potassium, and folate.

Many fruits are also good sources of fiber, which is important for gut health. High-fiber foods with a lot of sugar, like fruits, don’t have the same effect on your blood sugar levels as high-sugar, low-fiber foods. This is because high-fiber foods get digested more slowly. Eating foods with a lot of fiber can also help you to stay fuller longer.

**How much fruit should I eat each day?**

[CALLOUT] Based on your age, sex, and general activity level, you should eat [X] cups of fruit each day. [/CALLOUT]

A quick note about fruit juice. Juicing removes the fiber from the whole fruit. Without the fiber, our bodies are more affected by the natural sugar in the juice. It’s best to drink only 100% fruit juice (meaning no sugar has been added), and no more than one cup per day.

**What counts as a cup?**

One cup of fruit is one cup of fresh, frozen, or canned fruit; one cup of 100% fruit juice; or ½ cup of dried fruit. In case you don’t have a measuring cup handy, here are some examples of 1 cup of fruit:

* 1 large banana
* 1 small apple or ½ large apple
* 1 large orange
* 2 large plums
* About 8 large strawberries
* 1 cup of applesauce or fruit cocktail
* ½ cup raisins

**How can I get more fruit in my diet?**

There are many different ways to get more fruit in your diet. You don’t even have to eat a whole cup at once. If you need 2 cups of fruits each day, you can spread them out by eating 4 half-cup portions. Also look for variety by adding different colors to your plate with different types of fruits. Here are some other ways to add fruit to your diet:

* Make a yogurt and fruit parfait for a flavorful, protein-filled breakfast. You can even use no sugar added frozen fruits! Just dump frozen fruits and yogurt into a container and pop it in the refrigerator at night. In the morning, you’ll have a yogurt parfait ready to go.
* Add fruit to your salads. Bite-sized chunks of apple add a nice crunch. Try orange or strawberry slices for a burst of flavor.
* Make your own trail mix. Measure one-fourth of a cup of dried fruit and 1 ounce of nuts. Put them in a travel container for an on-the-go snack that has a half-serving of fruit.
* Keep fruit where you can see it. Bananas, oranges, apples, and other fruits that don’t need to be refrigerated can sit on the counter. Or, wash and cut up fruit and keep it in see-through containers in the front of your refrigerator. Seeing is eating. When you need a snack, if fruit is what you see first, fruit is what you will eat.
* Fruit makes a great dessert. Try baking fruit with spices. Mix together a few different fruits into a fruit salad. Or eat freshly washed berries for a low-key treat.

**Are there any fruits I should avoid?**

All fruits are good for you. Sometimes how a fruit is packaged or prepared changes the nutritional value, though. For example, canned fruit is often affordable and convenient. But canned fruits are often packed in syrup, which adds a lot of sugar and calories. Look for canned fruits that are packed in water or juice, not syrup. If those varieties aren’t available, look for those packed in light syrup, which has less sugar and calories than heavy syrup. Or, try frozen fruit and get the same nutrition without the extra sugar and calories.

Also, if you like dried fruits, read the food label and choose varieties that don’t have added sugars.

**A final word**

Whole fruits provide lots of vitamins and minerals in a convenient, low-fat, and low-sodium form. There are plenty of different kinds of fruits out there, so go out and try new ones. Give yourself permission to enjoy this sweet and healthy treat today and every day.

**Sources:**

USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. (2015, July 27). All About the Fruit Group. Retrieved August 26, 2015, from <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/fruit>