

# Live Healthy Georgia – Seniors Taking Charge!



June 2007 Newsletter

## Fun with Fruits and Vegetables

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The lazy days of summer are here, but for fruits and vegetables, it's a busy time of year. It's time for colorful crops of fruits and vegetables to dazzle the eye and please the palate. With so much produce available, it's also time to take advantage of the nutrition fruits and vegetables have to offer.

Fruits and vegetables are the perfect examples of what you just can't get from dietary supplements. Not only do they contain vitamins and minerals, they also contain an array of natural compounds called phytochemicals that help to protect our bodies from disease. Fruits and vegetables fill us up by providing fiber and water, and, not to mention, the colors and flavors of these foods appeal to our senses.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines recommends that we get about seven to ten servings of fruits and vegetables daily in our older years, depending on our calorie needs. While this may seem like a lot, it can be very easy to get them in. Consider

that one serving of fruit is only ½ banana or large apple, ¼ cup dried fruit, ½ cup berries, or ½ cup 100% juice. For most cut-up raw or cooked vegetables, ½ cup counts as a serving, and one cup is a serving for leafy salad greens. You may already be getting more servings than you think!

While we all have our favorites, it is a good idea to eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. An easy way to do this is by “eating from the rainbow.” When you fill your grocery cart with fruits and vegetables, look to see if you have several colors there. For example, *orange* sweet potatoes, and bright *green* broccoli florets make a delicious complement to an evening meal.

Try to think of examples for each color: orange/yellow (*carrots, squash, pumpkin, oranges*), green, especially dark green (*green beans, spinach, collards, peas*), blue/purple (*grapes, plums, blueberries*), red (*tomatoes, peppers, cherries, berries*), and white



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(garlic, onions, cauliflower). Eating a variety of colors ensures that you're getting the many different nutrients that are found in different types of fruits and vegetables.

Fruits and vegetables can be prepared in a variety of ways. Try steaming, baking, grilling, and roasting to create different flavor experiences. Herbs and spices, such as cinnamon, basil, garlic, and parsley, can add zest to fruits and vegetables without adding a lot of fat, salt, and sugar.



While we often only think of fresh fruits and vegetables piled in the produce section of the grocery store, don't forget frozen, canned, and dried varieties. These count toward daily fruit and vegetable intake, too. For instance, try making lasagna or an enchilada using frozen spinach, or use canned peaches for a quick cobbler. Be sure to check the package labels, however, to be sure they do not have added fat, salt, and sugar.

So what might a day of eating fruits and vegetables look like? Look at the following ideas on how to fit them into your daily diet.

**Breakfast:** Add fruit to whole grain cereal; enjoy a veggie omelet or scramble; layer fruit, yogurt, and granola for a tasty parfait; top whole grain waffles with fruit; have 100% juice

**Lunch:** Have a sandwich with bean or tomato soup; build a mixed greens salad topped with grilled chicken; create a veggie burrito or stuff a pita pocket with vegetables and cheese; have a baked potato with chili

**Evening meal:** Enjoy vegetable side dishes, like a baked sweet potato and steamed broccoli; try whole wheat pasta with tomato sauce or tossed with veggies; add vegetables to casseroles; top pizza with veggies

**Snacks:** Munch on a few baked tortilla chips with fat-free bean dip or salsa; dip raw vegetables in low-fat ranch or in peanut butter; thread fruit onto skewers with cheese cubes for quick kabobs

For more information, see:

2005 Dietary Guidelines at:

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/> (see Chapter 5 and Appendix A2)

MyPyramid at:

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/index.html>

Fruits and Veggies, More Matters at:

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/>