

Smart Choices

Nutrition News

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Inside the Pyramid—Vegetables

Vegetables are a powerhouse of nutrition. Most vegetables are low in calories and fat and have no cholesterol. Vegetables provide lots of vitamins and minerals that are vital for good health.

People who include more vegetables in their diet are likely to have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases such as some forms of cancer, heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

The new food pyramid recommends that adults get about 2 to 3 cups of vegetables a day. Recommended servings sizes are now given in cups.

Differences in the amount you eat depends on your age, sex and level of physical activity. For example, women age 19 to 50 need 2 1/2 cups a day whereas, men of the same age should aim for 3 cups.

It's important to eat a variety of vegetables. Try to have dark green and orange vegetables make up the majority of your choices. Then include dry beans and peas, starchy vegetables and

others to round out the diet every week.

To make the most of your shopping dollar buy fresh vegetables in season. They will cost less and are likely to be of better quality. Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare such as pre-washed salad greens, baby car-



rots or grape tomatoes. And round out your vegetable choices by stocking up on frozen vegetables that can be easily cooked or steamed in the microwave. The microwave can be used to quickly bake white or sweet potatoes too.

Set a good example for children by eating a variety of vegetables with meals and for snacks.

What Counts as a cup?

- ◆ 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables
- ◆ 1 cup 100% vegetable juice
- ◆ 2 cups of raw leafy greens such as spinach, romaine lettuce, dark green leafy lettuce
- ◆ 3 (5") broccoli spears
- ◆ 2 medium carrots
- ◆ 1 (2 1/4" diameter) sweet potato
- ◆ 1 (2 1/2" diameter) white potato
- ◆ 1 cup whole or mashed, cooked dry beans and peas
- ◆ 1 large ear (8-9") corn

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