

Fruits and Vegetables: More Matters

September is Fruit and Vegetables — More Matters Month. Now is a great time to boost the amount of fruit and vegetables you eat each day. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend a daily intake of at least two cups of fruits and two and a half cups of vegetables for a 2,000 calorie per day diet, but research shows that most people do not reach this goal.

Try some of these tasty ways to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat each day:

- A "grate" compliment: Add grated, shredded or chopped vegetables such as zucchini, spinach and carrots to lasagna, meat loaf, mashed potatoes and mixed meat, poultry, pasta, rice and other grain dishes.
- Get saucy with fruit: Puree berries, apples, peaches or pears for a thick, sweet sauce on grilled or broiled seafood or poultry, or on pancakes, French toast or waffles.
- Add pizzazz to pizza: Variety abounds when using vegetables as pizza toppings. Try broccoli florets, carrot shreds, thinly sliced zucchini, chopped spinach, red and green bell pepper strips, chopped tomatoes and mushrooms.
- Focus on veggies: Enjoy 3-ounce portions of cooked meat, poultry or fish and fill the rest of your plate with vegetables, fruits and grain products. A vegetable-meat kebob is a fun way to do this and is also great for grilling.
- Stock up: Fill your fridge with raw vegetables and fruits — "nature's fast food" — cleaned, fresh and ready to eat.

Making sure you meet the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables is also a simple way to get a variety of vitamins and minerals as well as phytonutrients that promote health.