EAP MESSENGER

A quarterly newsletter of INVEST EAP

INVEST EAP

Supporting a Healthy Organization

Volume 17 Issue 4 Fall 2015

KEEP SUMMER'S HEALTHY EATING HABITS THROUGH WINTER

As the warm, sunny days of summer wane, you might find it more challenging to eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables. Fresh-picked produce is less accessible, and autumn tempts with comfort foods and holiday goodies. Don't let cooler weather and overcast days become your excuse to make unhealthy eating choices. Stick with your nutritious habits during the next few months to maintain a healthy weight, prevent colds and illness, and stay energized through winter.

Eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruit boosts your immune system and reduces risk for heart attacks, stroke and several types of cancer. Fruits and veggies contain fiber, which combats cardiovascular disease, obesity and type 2 diabetes. High fiber foods provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories and promote digestive health.

Most produce is naturally low in fat, sodium and calories. It provides essential nutrients including potassium, vitamin C and folate (also known as B9 and folic acid). Diets rich in potassium help maintain healthy blood pressure and decrease age-related bone loss. Vitamin C is important for repair of body tissues, helps heal cuts and wounds, and keeps teeth and gums healthy. Folate (folic acid) helps the body form red blood cells, prevents heart disease and certain cancers and releases serotonin, which promotes sound sleep and a balanced mood.

No single fruit or vegetable provides all of the nutrients you need to be healthy. The key lies in the variety in your diet. The following suggestions can help you sustain a wholesome nutritional regime all year long.

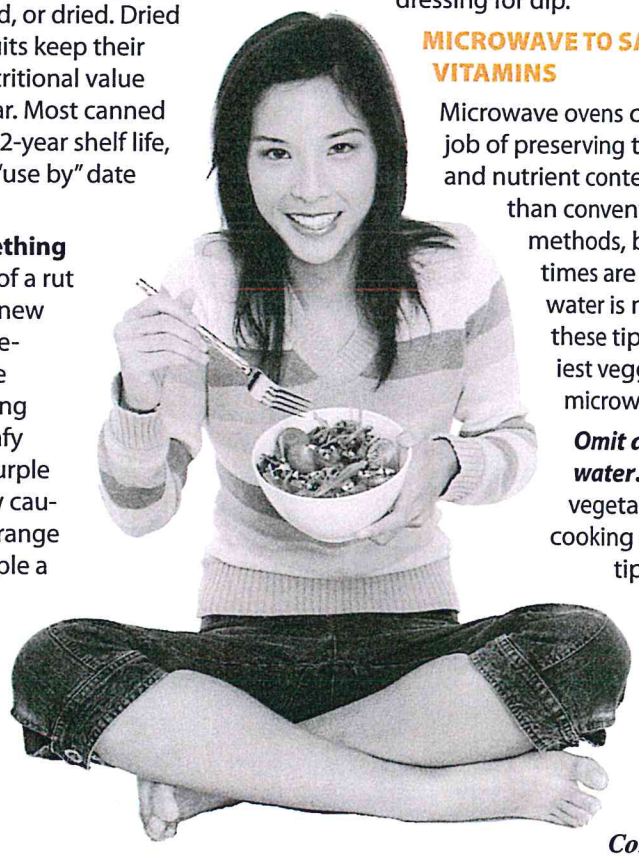
Choose a daily rainbow

Fresh produce doesn't hibernate until spring: The change of seasons means you'll see a shift in the types of fruits and vegetables featured in the produce aisle. Squash, citrus, and hearty root vegetables take center stage, and present opportunities to taste different flavors and test new recipes. Here are some delicious ways to power pack your eating plan:

Keep it where you can see it. You'll be more likely to eat fruit if it's available on the counter or in the front of the refrigerator.

Preserve the flavors. While sun-ripened tomatoes and berries are a summer memory, you can still enjoy them frozen, canned, or dried. Dried and frozen fruits keep their flavor and nutritional value for up to a year. Most canned goods have a 2-year shelf life, but heed the "use by" date on the can.

Choose something new. Get out of a rut and try some new fruits and vegetables. Explore colors, including dark green leafy vegetables, purple carrots, yellow cauliflower and orange peppers. Sample a different kind of lettuce, such as peppery arugula or mildly bitter radicchio.



Explore preparation techniques. Check out new recipes where vegetables or fruits take center stage. Try roasting veggies with fresh herbs and poaching or grilling fruit. Shred raw beets into your salad and toss sautéed tomatoes on your pasta.

Make it fun. The brilliant colors and flavors of fruits and vegetables make them perfect party favors and edible décor. Place a pineapple in the center of a bowl and surround it with cold-weather fruits such as apples, pears, grapes, oranges, dates, persimmons and figs. Arrange cut portions into a funny face on your child's plate. Paint a rainbow with bright veggies on a large plate and add a low-calorie dressing for dip.

MICROWAVE TO SAVE TIME AND VITAMINS

Microwave ovens can do a better job of preserving the color, texture and nutrient content of foods than conventional cooking methods, because cooking times are shorter and less water is needed. Follow these tips for the healthiest veggies from your microwave.

Omit additional water. Rinse fresh vegetables in the cooking container and tip the bowl over with the cover angled so the water will drain. The remaining water droplets should be

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plenty to cook your vegetables. For frozen vegetables, just heat them as they are. They have enough frozen moisture within them to cook properly.

Re-use liquid. Instead of discarding it, pour the water used for cooking into other foods you are preparing to capture any nutrients that leached into it.

Avoid overcooking. Use low power and short cooking times to keep vegetables firm, not mushy.

Use safe containers. Choose glass, ceramic or plastic labeled "microwave safe." Styrofoam, carryout containers or plastics not labeled as safe may contain harmful substances that migrate into food when heated.

MAKEOVER YOUR COMFORT FOODS

Create lower-calorie versions of your favorite dishes by replacing higher calorie ingredients with fruits and vegetables.

Reduce Cheesy Starch. Gratin potatoes and pasta baked with gooey cheddar or mozzarella may comfort your soul, but these fatty foods upset your healthy eating plan. Modify your recipes with low fat cheese and skim milk, and add vegetables to improve the nutritional profile.

Slenderize Rich Omelets and Quiche. Exchange spinach, mushrooms, or onions for one of the eggs and half of the cheese. The vegetables will add volume and flavor to the dish with fewer calories.

Update Creamy Soups. Warm chowder feels so nutritious, but it may be loaded with cream and butter, high in sodium, and brimming with calories. Choose soups that are broth based, like vegetable or minestrone. When making soup at home, replace cream with skim milk and go light on the salt. Cut back on noodles, potatoes and meat and add chopped broccoli, carrots and peppers.

Swap out the Fat in Cakes. Replace the oil in cakes with applesauce or cooked, pureed pumpkin. The dessert will be moist and flavorful with less fat and fewer calories. This works form most cake recipes, including boxed mix, and for muffins, too. Cutting 1/3 cup of oil saves 54 calorie and 6 grams of fat per serving.

Emphasize Fruit in Pies. Reduce the amount of sugar in the filling by 25-50%. You'll taste more fruit and save 46 calories for every tablespoon of sugar omitted. Instead of covering the pie with a top-crust, sprinkle an oatmeal crumb mixture. You'll consume fewer calories and more soluble fiber.

Get Creative with Frozen Desserts. Indulge your ice cream craving with a cold dessert you make yourself in 10 minutes. Combine frozen fruit, equal parts plain nonfat yogurt, and sugar or honey, and a few drops of lemon juice in a food processor. Process until creamy and serve immediately.

THINK WHILE YOU EAT

Sometimes people eat too much because they are not focusing on eating. Instead of savoring each mouthful, they unconsciously gulp their food while reading, driving, or watching television. Eating *mindfully* means being fully engaged in your meal. Train yourself to slow down:

Breathe. Practice relaxation breathing before starting your meal.

Ponder. Think about the people who tended your food — those who harvested the raw ingredients and prepared the final products. Contemplate how your meal will nourish your body and provide energy throughout the day.

Notice. Perceive the flavors — sweet, savory, salty. Enjoy the textures — smooth, chewy crunchy. Fully experience each bite before swallowing. Recognize how your hunger signals fade. When they're no longer noticeable, stop eating.

HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED?

The amount of produce you need to eat depends on age, gender, and level of physical activity. The US Department of Agriculture and Centers for Disease Control recommend filling half of your plate with fruit and vegetables. Use this calculator to determine the amount that's right for you: **http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/fruitsvegetables/howmany.html**

6 Second Summary:

- As winter sets in, prompt yourself to continue eating a diverse array of colorful produce:
- Keep fruits and veggies easily available and ready to eat.
- Experiment with different varieties of fruits and vegetables and preparation techniques.
- Use the microwave oven to preserve vegetables' flavor, color and nutritional content.
- Replace rich, fattening comfort foods with lower-calorie versions that incorporate fruits and vegetables.
- Eat mindfully, savoring the flavors and thinking about where the food comes from and how it will nourish your body.

RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control, Nutrition for Everyone: *www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/fruitsvegetables/index.html*
Fruit and vegetable nutrition information and portion calculator

USDA ChooseMyPlate.gov
www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/
Tips and advice for eating a balanced diet with recommended portion sizes

***The Nutrition Source*, Harvard School of Public Health**
www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/vegetables-full-story/
Article with nutritional advice and relevant studies

Eating Well nutrient library
www.eatingwell.com/nutrition_health/nutrient_library
Facts about essential nutrients and how to include them in your diet

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