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More than Apples and Bananas

By Glenda Wentworth, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Eagle County Extension

Everyone likes celebrations. Eating more fruits and vegetables is celebrating a healthy lifestyle. If “healthy eating” makes you think of the foods you can not have, focus on all the yummy foods that you can eat.

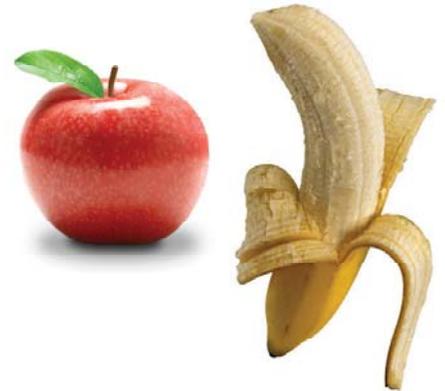
Most fruits and vegetables are low in fat. They are easy to prepare and are great sources of fiber, vitamins and other healthy nutrients. Eating more fruits and vegetables reduces the risk of cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, and other diseases.

We often get tired of the same fruits and vegetables fixed and eaten the same way. Fruits are more than just apples and bananas. Vegetables are more than carrots and corn. Discover the wide variety of fruits and vegetables available at your grocery store or local farmers market. Variety provides us many flavors, textures and nutrients that promote health.

We often make the mistake of buying a lot of fruits and vegetables at one time. Then we don't use them before they spoil and end up throwing them out. To avoid wasting food write down the meals and snacks you plan to serve including any fruits and vegetables. Then make a list to take shopping.

Tips for adding more fruits and vegetables for a healthy lifestyle:

- Try one new fruit or vegetable each week.
- Stir fry broccoli, cauliflower, and other vegetables in a small amount of oil with small chunks of fish, chicken, or tofu.
- Vegetables taste better when they are not over-cooked. Cook just until the color is bright.
- Experiment with herbs and spices as a substitute for added fat and salt.
- Grill or steam vegetables with an herb you haven't tried. Try rosemary with peas, dill with green beans, oregano with zucchini, and basil with tomatoes.
- Serve canned or frozen vegetables for a quick side dish. Just microwave and serve.
- When using canned or frozen vegetables, look for vegetables without added salt, butter, or cream sauces.
- Shred carrots or zucchini into spaghetti sauce.
- Pizza night! Add broccoli, mushrooms, onions, and any other favorite vegetables to your pizza before you bake it.



- Taste test different varieties of tomatoes, apples, etc... Vote as a family to pick the winner.
- Add fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables to the family's favorite soups, stews or pasta dishes.
- Canned, dried, and frozen fruits are all good options. Choose canned varieties of fruit packed in water or in their own juice.
- Freeze 100% fruit juice for healthy frozen fruit juice bars.
- Top pancakes, waffles, cereal or yogurt with any kind of chopped fruit or berries.
- Have a taste test of fruits and vegetables that are the same color (Red: cranberries, raspberries, red apples, red bell peppers, strawberries, tomatoes, watermelon).

Activity for Health: Container Gardens

Gardening is a fun learning activity to encourage children to make healthy food choices. Children who grow vegetables are more likely to eat them. Container gardening is ideal for homes with limited indoor and outdoor space.

Container Gardening Directions

1. Choose seeds that grow in limited space. Some suggestions are peppers, tomatoes, parsley, or cucumbers.
 2. Use a fertile potting soil since plants get their nutrients from good soil.
 3. Containers for starting seeds can be egg cartons or washed-out yogurt containers.
 4. Poke a few holes in the bottom of containers for drainage.
 5. Add soil and a few seeds. Place on a tray.
 6. Plants need light to grow. Place them by a south- or west-facing window for natural daylight.
 7. Seedlings are baby plants that like warm temperatures. Try to keep the temperature within 70–75° F.
 8. Seedlings like to be moist, but not too wet.
 - At first, dampen seedlings with a spray bottle, on a daily basis.
 - Once the seedlings begin to appear, water them by filling the tray underneath the containers with a shallow layer of water.
 9. Label the seeds with name tags (e.g., writing on popsicle sticks or tongue depressors), so that plants can be identified when they start to grow.
 10. When small plants have begun to come out with 3 to 4 leaves, transplant to a more permanent container (e.g., window box, an inside or outside container, or an outdoor garden).
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Lets Talk:

Let children know that they will be seeing more fruits and vegetables at meals and snacks. Explain that eating fruits and vegetable helps our bodies grow big, strong and healthy. Let them know that you don't expect them to like every new food they taste, but that you would like them to try a taste. Explain that the more kinds of fruits and vegetables they eat the more good stuff (nutrients) their body has to help them grow and stay healthy. Show and tell kids that you too are going to give some new foods a try!

References:

www.cdc.gov/Features/GrowingVegetables/
www.kidsgardening.com
www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov
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