

Extension

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Newsletter

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What Color is Your Food?

Eat a rainbow of fruits and vegetables for better health

Gisele Jefferson, Extension Agent, Washington County

It's been said we eat with our eyes before we take our first bite. A plate filled with colorful fruits and vegetables makes us more hungry and eager to eat. Research tells us eating a variety of fruits and vegetables help keep our hearts, minds and bodies healthy.

Fruits and vegetables add variety (colors, textures, shapes, and flavors) to our meals and snacks. They are naturally low in fat and calories, cholesterol-free, and high in fiber, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables, in combination with an overall low-fat diet, may help reduce risks of heart disease and certain types of cancer.

Nutrition experts tell us to eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Children ages 2 to 6 years old should eat five servings a day (serving size for small children = ¼ cup). Children 7 years and older and women should aim for seven servings a day. Teen boys and men should eat nine servings a day. Eat a variety of different colors of fruits and vegetables every week. Foods are available in a rainbow of colors — red, orange, yellow, green and blue/purple. White fruits and vegetables are nutritious, too! Each color group gives us different nutrients our bodies need.

Tips to get more fruits and vegetables

- Keep cleaned fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator -- ready to eat.
- Have vegetables with low-fat dip for a snack.
- Add vegetables to casseroles, stews and soups.
- Have fruit for dessert.
- Keep a bowl of apples, bananas and/or oranges on the kitchen counter.
- Choose a side salad made with a variety of leafy greens.
- Add lettuce, onions, peppers and/or tomatoes to sandwiches.
- Order veggie toppings on your pizza.
- Enjoy fruit smoothies for breakfast or snacks.
- Pack fresh or dried fruits for quick snacks.
- Drink 100% fruit juice instead of sugar sweetened beverages.

To get the most nutrients from fruits and vegetables:

- Eat apples, pears, carrots, potatoes and other foods without peeling the skin to get more fiber and nutrients. Simply wash and eat – or wash and cook.



Five-to-Nine servings per day - What's an adult serving size, anyway?

- ½ cup cut-up canned, frozen or fresh fruits and vegetables
- 1 medium fruit
- ¾ cup (6 oz.) 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- 1 cup raw leafy greens
- ¼ cup dried fruit

- Steam, broil, or microwave to keep the most vitamins and minerals in your food.
- Don't boil vegetables in lots of water (some nutrients are destroyed or dissolved in hot water).
- Serve foods promptly. The longer they stand, the more nutrients are lost.

Let's Talk

Explain to children that fruits and vegetables help their bodies grow strong and healthy. They are fun to eat! Some crunch, some squirt, some they peel and some they don't. Some can be grown in their garden! Get children talking, by asking "How many fruits and veggies can you name in the different color groups? Which ones do you like? Which ones would you like to try for the first time?" Make a plan to regularly try a new veggie or fruit. As the adult, be ready to lead by example by taking the first bite.

Red	Orange/Yellow	Green	Blue/Purple	White
Apples, pink grapefruit, red cabbage, radishes, red onion, red peppers, strawberries, tomatoes, cherries, watermelon, rhubarb, cranberries	Cantaloupe, corn, carrots, butternut squash, lemons, mango, oranges, papaya, peaches, pineapple, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, yellow peppers	Asparagus, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, collard greens, cucumbers, grapes, green beans, kiwi, green peppers, limes, honeydew, kale, peas, spinach	Beets, dark beans, eggplant, grapes, blueberries, plums, blackberries, figs, prunes, raisins	Bananas, cauliflower, ginger, jicama, mushrooms, onions, parsnips, potatoes, turnips

Recipe for Health: Rainbow Quinoa Salad

½ cup Quinoa, dry
 1 cup water
 1 pinch salt
 1 cup bell pepper (any color), chopped
 1 cucumber, chopped
 1 cup carrots, chopped
 ¼ cup red onion, chopped
 1-2 garlic cloves, chopped or minced
 1 can of corn, drained
 1 can of black beans, drained
 ½ cup olive oil
 ½ cup vinegar (cider or Balsamic)
 Black pepper to taste
 2-4 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs
 (parsley, dill, oregano, or basil, etc.)



1. Cook 1/2 cup dry quinoa in 1 cup water, with a pinch of salt – according to the package instructions. Yields about 1 ½ cups cooked quinoa. Put in a bowl/dish, cover and refrigerate.
2. Wash, peel and/or chop the vegetables and garlic, put into a large salad bowl with the quinoa.
3. Drain and rinse cans of corn and black beans; add to the salad.
4. Whisk together olive oil and vinegar.
5. Add some fresh ground black pepper and a light sprinkle of herbs.
6. Mix/stir salad to distribute the veggies and dressing. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Makes a large bowl of colorful and flavorful salad.