



## September is Fruit and Vegetable Month



### What is Fruit And Vegetable Month?

In March 2007, the National 5 A Day program became the National Fruit and Vegetable Program and launched a new public health initiative, Fruits & Veggies—More Matters. The new guidelines recommend two to six and a half cups of fruits and vegetables a day or the equivalent of four to 13 servings. In addition to this goal, the program seeks to inform everyone that eating fruits and vegetables can improve their health and reduce the risk of cancer and other diseases, including heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and macular degeneration.

### What Can Eating Fruits and Vegetables Do For Me?

It's essential to get a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables into your diet every day! Why? Because colorful fruits and vegetables provide the wide range of vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytochemicals your body uses to maintain good health and energy levels, protect against the effects of aging, and reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease.\* **Phytochemicals** are plant chemicals that may have health-related effects. However, they are not considered important nutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, and vitamins. Many of the phytochemicals and other compounds that make fruits and vegetables good for us also give them their color. It's important to sample the complete color spectrum every day to get the full health-promoting benefits of fruits and vegetables.

### Make Colorful Food Choices

**Blue/purple** fruits and vegetables contain different amounts of health-promoting phytochemicals, such as **anthocyanins** and **phenolics**, currently being studied for their antioxidant and anti-aging benefits. Include BLUE/PURPLE in your low-fat diet to help maintain: a lower risk of some cancers\*, urinary tract health, memory function, and healthy aging. Get blue/purple every day with foods such as: blackberries, blueberries, black currants, dried plums, elderberries, purple figs, purple grapes, plums, raisins, purple asparagus, purple cabbage, purple carrots, eggplant, purple Belgian endive, purple peppers, and potatoes (purple-fleshed).

**Green** vegetables contain different amounts of phytochemicals such as **lutein** and **indoles**, which interest researchers because of their likely antioxidant, health-promoting benefits. Include GREEN in your low-fat diet to maintain: a lower risk of some cancers\*, vision health, and strong bones and teeth. Go green every day with fruits and vegetables like these: avocados, green apples, green grapes, honeydew melon, kiwifruit, limes, green pears, artichokes, arugula, asparagus, broccoflower, broccoli, broccoli rabe, brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, green beans, green cabbage, celery, Chayote squash, cucumbers, endive, leafy greens, leeks, lettuce, green onion, okra, peas, green pepper, sugar snap peas, spinach, watercress, and zucchini.

**White, tan, and brown** fruits and vegetables contain different amounts of phytochemicals of interest to scientists. These include **allicin**, found in the garlic and onion family. The mineral **selenium**, found in mushrooms, is also the subject of research. Including WHITE in your low-fat diet helps maintain: heart health, cholesterol levels that are already healthy, and a lower risk of some cancers\*. Get all the health benefits of white by including foods such as: bananas, brown pears, dates, white nectarines, white peaches, cauliflower, garlic, ginger, Jerusalem artichoke, jicama, kohlrabi, mushrooms, onions, parsnips, and potatoes (white-fleshed), shallots, turnips, white corn.

**Yellow and orange** fruits and vegetables contain different amounts of antioxidants such as **vitamin C**, as well as **carotenoids** and **bioflavonoids**, two types of phytochemicals that scientists are studying for their health-promoting potential. Including YELLOW/ORANGE in your low-fat diet helps maintain: a healthy heart, vision health, a healthy immune system, and a lower risk of some cancers\*. Choose yellow/orange fruits and vegetables like: yellow apples, apricots, cantaloupe, yellow figs, grapefruit, golden kiwifruit, lemon, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, yellow pears, persimmons, pineapples, tangerines, yellow watermelon, yellow beets, butternut squash, carrots, yellow peppers, yellow potatoes, pumpkin, rutabagas, yellow summer squash, sweet corn, sweet potatoes, yellow tomatoes, yellow winter squash.

Specific phytochemicals in the **red** group that are being studied for their health-promoting properties include **lycopene** and **anthocyanins**. Include a variety of RED fruits and vegetables in your low-fat diet to help maintain: a healthy heart, memory function, a lower risk of some cancers\*, and urinary tract health. Include red fruits and vegetables in your diet such as: red apples, blood oranges, cherries, cranberries, red grapes, pink/red grapefruit, red pears, pomegranates, raspberries, strawberries, watermelon, beets, red peppers, radishes, radicchio, red onions, red potatoes, rhubarb, tomatoes.

*\* Low-fat diets rich in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of some types of cancer, a disease associated with many factors.*

## Ways to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Intake

- Have a fruit or juice at breakfast daily.
- Have a fruit or vegetable snack each day.
- Stock up on dried, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables.
- Make fruit and vegetables visible in your home.
- Microwave vegetables for dinner.
- Grab an apple, orange, banana, pear, or other piece of portable fruit to eat on the go.
- Snack on raw veggies like baby carrots, pepper strips, broccoli, and celery.
- Pick up ready-made salads from the produce shelf for a quick salad anytime.
- Pile spinach leaves, tomatoes, peppers, and onions on your pizza.
- Add strawberries, blueberries, bananas, and other brightly colored fruits — fresh, frozen, or canned — to your waffles, pancakes, or toast.
- Stash bags of dried fruit in your car and at your desk for a convenient snack.
- Stir fresh or frozen vegetables into your pasta, noodles, or omelet.
- Whip up smoothies made from fresh or frozen berries, ice, and yogurt.
- Jazz up your soups or sauces with a can of kidney beans, peas, corn, or green beans.



## **Expert Advice from The Cancer Institute of New Jersey**

Maureen Huhmann is a registered dietitian at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. She currently counsels patients on healthy eating during and after cancer treatment. Maureen is also involved in chemoprevention trials at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Here are her thoughts about good nutrition and cancer prevention:

“Fruit and vegetables are a very important part of our diet. They provide not only fiber, but important vitamins and minerals as well. We should all have at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Cancer survivors should try to have 10 to 12 servings a day. This may seem like a lot, but serving sizes are relatively small, and it can be achieved with a little planning. One serving of fruit is equivalent to 1 medium apple or 15 grapes, and a serving of vegetables is ½ cup cooked vegetable, or 1 cup raw vegetable. There are many ways to get these fruits and vegetables in: substitute your snack of potato chips with carrot sticks or cucumber slices, replace your evening ice cream with a frozen banana, frozen grapes, or frozen blueberries. Remember canned and frozen fruits and vegetables count too, so you can meet your fruit and vegetable goals year round. Including at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day will help to provide the phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables that are linked to cancer prevention.”

## **Cancer Prevention Clinical Trials**

Prevention trials are research studies designed to answer important questions about the early detection and prevention of cancer. People who have certain health conditions may be able to participate in some of these trials. By finding and getting rid of abnormal cells, we may be able to prevent cancer. You can be part of our program to prevent cancer by participating in one of these trials. Participation in research studies *can* cure cancer!

If you would like further information about clinical trials (available in New Jersey) for preventing cancer, please call toll-free **New Jersey Cancer Trial Connect at 1-866-788-3929** or visit the Web site at **www.njetc.org**. For additional information about nationwide cancer prevention trials, you can call the **National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4 CANCER** or visit their Web site at **www.cancer.gov**.

## **Where Can I Find Further Information?**

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey's Clinical Dietitian  
Maureen Huhmann, DCn, RD, CSO  
email:huhmanma@umdnj.edu  
(732) 235-8508

The Resource and Learning Center  
www.cinj.org/rlc/  
(732) 235-9639

Produce For A Better Health Foundation  
www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org

Centers for Disease Control – Fruits and Veggies Matter  
www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/  
(800) 311-3435

The American Institute for Cancer Research  
www.aicr.org  
(800) 843-8114