

Fruits and Vegetables

July 2000

Section 6

Why Are Fruits and Vegetables Important?

Most people know what fruits and vegetables are but may not know why it is so important to eat them every day. They are excellent sources of fiber, complex carbohydrates, and numerous vitamins and minerals.

Diets that are rich in fruits and vegetables are associated with decreased risk of some cancers and

heart disease. Many Americans of all ages — but specifically teens — eat fewer than the recommended number of five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

In addition to making recommendations for the number of daily servings, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* further recommends that the fruits and vegetables eaten come from a variety of sources. Specifically, dark-green leafy and deep-yellow vegetables, citrus fruits or juices, melons, and berries are recommended.



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Why the Concern About Fruit and Vegetable Intake?

The results from the 1998 California Teen Eating, Exercise, and Nutrition Survey (CalTEENS) revealed that only 24% of teens ate five servings of fruits and vegetables the day of the survey. Other studies have shown that fried potatoes account for one-third of the vegetable servings for youth aged 2 to 19 years.

Fruits and vegetables provide varying amounts and types of nutrients, therefore variety is essential. The best way to eat fruits and vegetables is without additional fat and sugar.

Why Do Adolescents Avoid Fruits and Vegetables?

Teens often choose fast food or convenience foods over whole foods like fruits and vegetables. Some reasons for these choices include:

Availability

The most common reason teens gave for not eating more fruits and vegetables was because they were not available. [CalTEENS] For example, healthy food options from vending machines are generally limited to sodas, candy, and chips.

Peer influence

Studies have shown that eating healthy food is not a valued behavior in the teen culture unless it is used to lose weight or to become more attractive.

Perceptions

Healthy food choices are not perceived as convenient (see Section 2: *Adolescent Nutrition/Screening for Risk* guideline for more information on adolescent eating behaviors).

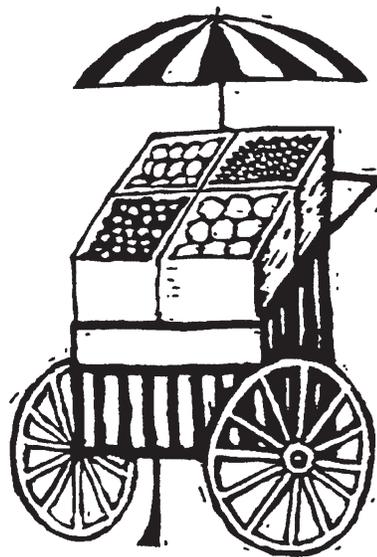
Knowledge and/or skills

Many teens may have the ability to identify healthy foods like fruits and vegetables, yet lack basic food selection and preparation skills.

Poor parental role modeling

Increasing numbers of single parent or dual working parent families rely on convenience and fast foods for many family meals.

It is also possible that the parents themselves do not have the skills necessary to make healthful meals.



Additional Screening

Use the “What’s my ‘5 A Day’ score?” activity sheet to determine how many servings of fruits and vegetables the client is currently eating.

Interventions/ Referrals

Use the activity sheet “Fruit and Vegetable Tips” to discuss ways to improve fruit and vegetable consumption.

Use the “Action Plan for Fruits and Vegetables” to assist the client in developing a plan for behavior change.

Follow-Up

Review the action plan with the client to determine if she achieved her goals for behavior change.

If the client did not make any changes...

... Explore what barriers prevented her from doing so and discuss possible strategies for removing the barriers.

If the client made changes but still falls short of recommended intake...

... Revise action plan with the client to change or add goals for behavior change.

If the client has made changes and achieved the recommended intake...

... Help her to develop a new action plan for maintaining the new behavior.

What's My "5 A Day" Score?

5 A Day Power Play, 1998

In the boxes below, record the number of fruit and vegetable servings you eat each day.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
At Breakfast					
At Lunch					
For Snacks					
For Dinner					
Total					

How did I score?

1-2 Servings - You're a lightweight. Reach for the fruits and veggies!

3-4 Servings - You're looking good. One or two servings more per day.

5-9 Servings - You're a champion! Keep up the great work.

Fruit and Vegetable Tips

Adapted from the ADA Food and Nutrition Guide, 1998

- ♥ Eat a variety of dark-green leafy and deep-yellow vegetables (red, orange, yellow) every day.
- ♥ Try using spinach, watercress, and romaine and butter lettuces instead of iceberg in your salad
- ♥ Expand your vegetable horizons. Try a new vegetable each week. Some of the vegetables that you used to dislike as a child may taste better to you now. Brussels sprouts, Swiss chard, kale, parsnips, beets, bok choy, okra, spaghetti squash, and many others may all surprise you. Remember to prepare them well and don't overcook them.
- ♥ Keep a bowl of cleaned, raw veggies in your refrigerator for a quick, easy snack.
- ♥ America's favorite fruits are apples, oranges, and bananas. These make great snacks or additions to recipes.
- ♥ Bring some fruit or vegetable juice with you so that you won't need to make a vending machine pit stop.

**Eating 5 to 7 servings of fruits and vegetables
Every day is an easy way to get the vitamins
and minerals you need to stay healthy!**



Be Sure to Get Your Fruits and Veggies Every Day!

Fruits	A = Vitiam A C = Vitam C F = Fiber	Vegetables (1/2 cup cooked)	A = Vitiam A C = Vitam C F = Fiber
Apple (1)	F	Asparagus	C, F
Apricots (3)	A, F	Beans, green	F
Banana (1)	F	Bok choy	A, C, F
Cantaloupe (1/2 cup)	A, C, F	Broccoli	A, C, F
Figs (2)	F	Brussels sprouts	C, F
Grapes (1 cup)	F	Cabbage	C, F
Grapefruit (1/2)	C, F	Carrots	A, F
Honeydew (1/2 cup)	C	Cauliflower	C, F
Kiwi (1)	C, F	Corn	F
Nectarine (1)	F	Dried beans or peas	F
Orange (1)	C, F	Eggplant	F
Papaya (1/2 cup)	A, C	Green pepper	C
Peach (1)	F	Greens	A, C, F
Pear (1)	F	Lettuce: (1c fresh spinach, romaine, red and greenleaf)	A, C, F
Pineapple (1/2 cup)	F	Okra	F
Plums (2)	F	Peas, green	F
Prunes (4)	F	Potato (1 med. baked)	C, F
Raisins (1/2 cup)	F	Spinach	A, F
Raspberries (1/2 cup)	C, F	Squash, winter	A, F
Strawberries (1/2 cup)	C	Sweet potato	A, F
Watermelon (1c)	C	Tomato (1)	A, C, F
Grapefruit juice	C	Zucchini	F
Orange juice	C		
Tomato juice	C		

ACTION PLAN for FRUITS & VEGGIES

Name: _____ Date: _____

Check the boxes that describe what you are presently doing and what you plan to do:

	AM DOING	PLAN TO DO
Eat one more fruit or veggie every day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat fruit or dessert instead of a calorie-rich sweet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat a fruit or veggie that I have never tasted or that I disliked in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drink fruit or vegetable juice instead of soda.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat fruit for a snack instead of potato chips or other high-calorie, low-nutrient snack food.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choose a high-fiber fruit or veggie from the list to eat today.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My idea for improving my fruit and veggie intake:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(optional)

