



# Fruits and Vegetables

## Why are Fruits and Vegetables Important?

Most teens know they should eat fruits and vegetables every day, but they may not know why it is important. Fruits and vegetables are excellent sources of nutrients, specifically fiber, complex carbohydrates, and numerous vitamins and minerals. All of these nutrients are needed to support a healthy body and mind. They also help boost energy levels and promote a healthy weight.

Because adolescence is a period of rapid growth and development, it is important for teens to consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables for health promotion and disease prevention. Diets that are rich in fruits and vegetables are associated with a decreased risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and some cancers.<sup>1-5</sup>

Recommendations by age and sex are shown in [Tables 1 and 2](#). Recommendations also vary by level of physical activity. In general, more fruits and vegetables are required for more active teens. Tables can be used and are available in [Appendix A](#), under the [Adolescent Nutrition](#) section, to find specific recommendations. Individualized recommendations can be created by using an interactive tool available at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov).

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## California Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines for Adolescents

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**Table 1. Recommended Daily Fruit Intake for Adolescents**

Age	Females	Males
9-13	1.5 cups	1.5 cups
14-18	1.5 cups	2 cups
19-30	2 cups	2 cups

Source: [USDA Choose MyPlate](#)<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2. Recommended Daily Vegetable Intake for Adolescents**

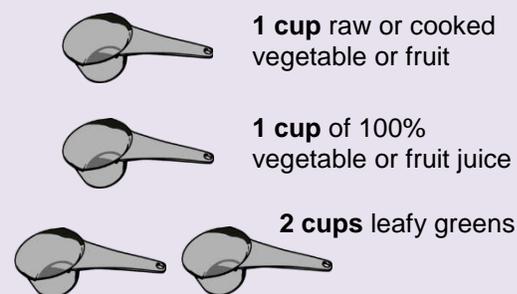
Age	Females	Males
9-13	2 cups	2.5 cups
14-18	2.5 cups	3 cups
19-30	2.5 cups	3 cups

Source: [USDA Choose MyPlate](#)<sup>7</sup>

**Figure FV-1 Cups or Servings?**

With the conversion of the Food Pyramid to My Plate, the recommendation language for serving size changed from “servings” to “cups.” This is confusing for both health care professionals and teens.

**In general, 1 cup of fruits and vegetables is equal to:**



To see specific examples of what counts as a cup of fruit or vegetables, visit the CDC webpage, [What Counts as a Cup?](#)

Or

For fruit examples visit the USDA ChooseMyPlate.gov webpage [What Counts as a Cup of Fruit?](#)

For vegetable examples, visit the USDA ChooseMyPlate.gov webpage [What Counts as a Cup of Vegetables?](#)

Fruit and vegetable recommendations for pregnant and breastfeeding adolescents are based on age, trimester, pre-pregnancy weight, and physical activity level. For general pregnant and breastfeeding nutrition recommendations, see the California [MyPlate for Moms](#). Tailored recommendations for pregnant and breastfeeding adolescents are available using the [Daily Food Plan for Moms](#).

In addition to making recommendations for the number of daily servings, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans further recommends eating a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables in order to get a broad range of nutrients in the diet. To learn more about the benefits of eating colorful fruits and vegetables, please explore [Fruits and Veggies More Matters](#).

## Why the Concern about Fruit and Vegetable Intake?

Many teens eat less than the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables each day. The results from the 2012 California Teen Eating, Exercise and Nutrition Survey (CalTEENS) revealed that 49% of adolescents reported eating no servings of vegetables or salad the day before completing the survey and 18% reported eating no servings of fruit or fruit juices. Adolescents also reported consuming less than 1 cup of salads and vegetables a day.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in the 2013 national Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) only 16% of students reported eating vegetables 3 or more times a day for the past 7 days.<sup>9</sup>

Eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables every day is essential to support good health and development in adolescence, which sets the stage for a healthy future in adulthood. 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

One of the most common reasons teens gave for not eating more fruits and vegetables was because they were not available.<sup>8</sup> For example, healthy food options from vending machines are generally limited to sodas, candy, and chips. Families, especially those with low incomes, may not purchase healthy foods because of their perceived high cost.<sup>10, 11</sup>

There appears to be an increased accessibility of unhealthy foods near schools and neighborhoods in urban areas, which leads to increased opportunity for adolescents to consume unhealthy convenience foods. Conversely, accessibility of healthy foods is a challenge to many families; particularly those living in low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, and rural areas.<sup>12-14</sup>

### Social Norms

Studies show that adolescents are more likely to eat junk food and fewer fruits and vegetables if that is what their peers are doing.<sup>15, 16</sup>

### Perceptions

Healthy food choices are perceived as inconvenient and lacking taste.<sup>8, 17</sup> (see [Adolescent Nutrition](#) for more information on adolescent eating behaviors)

### Knowledge and/or Skills

Teens may not have the knowledge or skills needed to prepare healthy foods. For example, one needs to know how to purchase, prepare, and properly cook fresh foods in order to make healthy food and snacks. See [Recipes/cookbooks](#) for adolescents in [Web Links Referenced/Additional Resources](#).

### Parental role modeling

Studies show that parents have an influence on what adolescents eat. Adolescents are likely to consume fruits and vegetables if their parents eat fruits and vegetables.<sup>18, 19</sup> Busy parents often rely on convenience and fast foods for many family meals instead of preparing something fresh.

It is also possible that the parents of teens do not have the skills or knowledge necessary to make healthful meals.<sup>20</sup>

## Additional Screening

Use the [Nutrition and Physical Activity Screen Questions](#) to screen for fruit and vegetable intake. Use the [Fruit and Veggie Quiz](#) to identify where the teen may need to increase fruit and vegetable intake.

## Interventions/Referrals

Use the [Fruit and Vegetable Tips](#) handout to discuss ways to improve fruit and vegetable consumption. Encourage the teen to fill half of her plate with fruits and vegetables at each meal.

Use the [Action Plan for Fruits and Vegetables](#) to assist the client in developing a plan for behavior change.

Use the [California teen cookbook](#) to show teens how to make quick, easy, and healthy meals and snacks. Try a cooking demonstration and provide a copy of the cookbook for teens to keep. A teen cookbook is available at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Documents/MO-NUPA-TeenCookbook-English.pdf>

## Follow-Up

Review the action plan with the client to determine if she achieved her goal(s) for behavior change.

**If the client did not make any changes,** explore what barriers prevented her from doing so. Discuss possible strategies for removing these barriers.

**If the client made changes but still falls short of the recommended intake,** praise her for the changes that she did make. Work with her to revise her action plan to change or add goals for behavior change.

**If the client has made changes and achieved the recommended intake,** praise her and consider developing a new action plan for maintaining the new behavior.

## Web Links Referenced/Additional Resources

Title	Resource Type	URL
<b>MyPlate</b>	Website	<a href="http://www.choosemyplate.gov">http://www.choosemyplate.gov</a>
<b>Fruit &amp; Veggies More Matters</b>	Website	<a href="http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/">http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/</a>
<b>SuperTracker</b>	Interactive tool	<a href="http://www.choosemyplate.gov/SuperTracker/createprofile.aspx">www.choosemyplate.gov/SuperTracker/createprofile.aspx</a>
<b>MyPlate for Teens</b>	Document (PDF)	<a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Documents/MO-NUPA-MyPlateforTeens.pdf">http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Documents/MO-NUPA-MyPlateforTeens.pdf</a>
<b>MyPlate for Moms</b>	Document (PDF)	<a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Documents/MO-NUPA-MyPlateForMoms.pdf">www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Documents/MO-NUPA-MyPlateForMoms.pdf</a>
<b>MyPlate for Moms (Spanish)</b>	Document (PDF)	<a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Documents/MO-NUPA-SP_MyPlateHandout.pdf">www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Documents/MO-NUPA-SP_MyPlateHandout.pdf</a>
<b>Daily Food Plans</b>	Webpage – Interactive Tools	<a href="http://www.choosemyplate.gov/supertracker-tools/daily-food-plans.html">http://www.choosemyplate.gov/supertracker-tools/daily-food-plans.html</a>
<b>What Counts as a Cup?</b>	Webpage	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/fruitsvegetables/cup.html">http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/fruitsvegetables/cup.html</a>
<b>Fruit &amp; Veggies Calculator</b>	Webpage – Interactive tool	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/fruitsvegetables/howmany.html">http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/fruitsvegetables/howmany.html</a>
<b>Fiber calculator</b>	Webpage - interactive tool	<a href="http://www.healthcalculators.org/calculators/fiber.asp">www.healthcalculators.org/calculators/fiber.asp</a>
<b>California Food Guide: Fulfilling the Dietary Guidelines for Americans</b>	Webpage	<a href="http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/publications/Pages/CFGTableofContents.aspx">www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/publications/Pages/CFGTableofContents.aspx</a>
<b>Recipes/cookbooks for adolescents</b>	Webpage	<a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Pages/EasyMealsandSnacks.aspx">www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/NutritionandPhysicalActivity/Pages/EasyMealsandSnacks.aspx</a> <a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/Recipes.aspx">http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/Recipes.aspx</a> <a href="http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/default.aspx">http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/default.aspx</a> <a href="http://cachampionsforchange.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/recipes.aspx">http://cachampionsforchange.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/recipes.aspx</a>
<b>Farmers markets search tool</b>	Webpage - interactive tool	<a href="http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/">http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/</a>
<b>Worksite nutrition and physical activity</b>	Webpage - resources	<a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/healthyliving/nutrition/Pages/WorksiteNutritionandPhysicalActivity.aspx">www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/healthyliving/nutrition/Pages/WorksiteNutritionandPhysicalActivity.aspx</a>
<b>Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative - Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health</b>	Webpage	<a href="http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/nutritionandphysicalactivity/Pages/default.aspx">www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/nutritionandphysicalactivity/Pages/default.aspx</a>
<b>Comprehensive website for adolescent girls' health</b>	Website	<a href="http://www.girlshealth.gov/">www.girlshealth.gov/</a>

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# Fruit and Veggie Quiz



I need to eat \_\_\_\_\_ cups of fruit each day  
 I need to eat \_\_\_\_\_ cups of vegetables each day  
 I need a total of \_\_\_\_\_ cups of fruits and vegetables each day  
 (Check here: [www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate/index.aspx](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate/index.aspx))

For each cup of fruit or vegetable you eat, record a check mark in the box of the specific day and meal. For example, if you consume one small apple and about one cup of baby carrots (approximately 12 baby carrots) for a snack on Tuesday, then record two check marks in that box. Record the total daily number of checks in the last row. To see what counts as a cup, go to:  
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/fruits-counts.pdf>  
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/vegetables-counts.pdf>

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Breakfast</b>					
<b>Lunch</b>					
<b>Snacks</b>					
<b>Dinner</b>					
<b>Total</b>					

**If you have:**

- **At least 5 total check marks each day (Or your specific total recommendation):**  
Great job. Keep up the good work.
- **3-4 total check marks each day:** You're doing well. Keep at it with a few more fruits and veggies each day.
- **Less than 3 total check marks each day:** You're making good progress, but may need help getting more colorful fruits and veggies in your life. Use the [Eat a Colorful Variety of Fruits and Vegetables](#) handout for more ideas. Check out the [Fruit and Vegetable Tips](#) for some ideas of how to add fruits and vegetables to your diet.

# Fruit and Vegetable Tips

Adapted from [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)

- Eat a rainbow of fruits and vegetables to look and feel your best. Choose red, orange, deep-yellow and dark-green, leafy vegetables.
- Try using spinach, watercress, romaine and butter lettuces instead of iceberg lettuce in your salad. A rule of thumb is the darker the better.
- Buy fruits and vegetables in season. They are fresher, taste better and usually cost less. Find seasonal fruits and veggies at a farmer's market near you. Visit <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/>
- Try a new vegetable each week. Some of the vegetables that you did not like as a child may taste good to you now. Brussels sprouts, Swiss chard, kale, parsnips, beets, bok choy, okra, spaghetti squash, and many others may all surprise you.
- Put veggies in your cooked soups, rice and pasta dishes.
- Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies. This is a good rule of thumb for each meal.
- Keep cleaned, chopped up fruits and veggies in your refrigerator for a quick and easy snack.
- Carry fresh fruit (or dried fruit) and chopped veggies with you for a healthy bite on the go.
- Apples, oranges, and bananas make great snacks or additions to recipes. Try putting sliced apples or oranges in your salads.
- Make most of your choices whole or cut-up fruit rather than juice, for the benefits that dietary fiber provides.
- Try cooking some fruit and veggie-filled meals using a healthy cookbook for teens.



Eating recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables every day is an easy way to get the vitamins and minerals you need to stay healthy and look your best.



# Be Sure to Get Your Fruits and Veggies Every Day



Fruits and vegetables have fiber and are filled with vitamins and minerals that help you look and feel your best. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables every day will ensure a broad range of nutrients in your diet. For more information, please visit: [www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/)

Nutrient	Benefits	Fruit Sources	Vegetable Sources
<b>Fiber</b>	Can lower your risk of diabetes and heart disease	Apples, berries, pears, bananas, guavas, kiwi, oranges	Lentils, lima beans, pinto beans, black beans, spinach
<b>Calcium</b>	Supports healthy bones and teeth	Calcium-fortified orange juice, figs, oranges, strawberries	Collard greens, soybeans (edamame), spinach, turnip greens
<b>Iron</b>	Provides energy Maintain healthy cells, skin, hair, and nails	Prune juice, dried fruit (Citrus fruits help absorption)	Beans, kale, collard greens, spinach
<b>Potassium</b>	Helps maintain healthy blood pressure	Apricots, bananas, tomatoes, cherries, kiwi	Pink beans, large Lima beans, white beans, broccoli, chickpeas, lentils, sweet potato,
<b>Vitamin A</b>	Promotes healthy skin and eyes Supports a healthy immune system	Apricots, cantaloupe, grapefruit, mangoes, watermelon	Carrots, collard greens, carrots, lettuce, sweet potato, spinach
<b>Vitamin C</b>	Supports your immune system and helps maintain healthy teeth and gums	Apricots, berries, papaya, pineapple, oranges, guavas, lemons, limes, tomatoes, melons, grapefruit	Asparagus, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, leafy greens, potatoes

# Eat a Colorful Variety of Fruits and Vegetables



Eat a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables every day to help you look and feel your best. For more ideas on fruits and vegetables visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) or [Fruits and Veggies More Matters](#)

## Red and Orange

- |              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| Red apples   | Apricots         |
| Beets        | Mangoes          |
| Cranberries  | Oranges          |
| Red Pears    | Carrots          |
| Radishes     | Grapefruit       |
| Raspberries  | Cantaloupe       |
| Cherries     | Tangerines       |
| Strawberries | Nectarines       |
| Pomegranates | Papayas          |
| Red Peppers  | Pumpkins         |
| Radicchio    | Butternut squash |
| Rhubarb      |                  |

## Green

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Green apples | Cabbage         |
| Avocados     | Cucumbers       |
| Green grapes | Endive          |
| Honeydew     | Kale            |
| Kiwi         | Leafy greens    |
| Limes        | Leeks           |
| Artichokes   | Okra            |
| Arugula      | Peas            |
| Asparagus    | Spinach         |
| Broccoli     | Sugar snap peas |
| Celery       | Zucchini        |

## Yellow

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Yellow apples | Parsnips       |
| Lemons        | Mushrooms      |
| Yellow pears  | Yellow peppers |
| Cantaloupe    | Yellow onions  |
| Pineapples    | Potatoes       |
| Summer squash | Corn           |
| Cauliflower   | Bananas        |

## Blue and Purple

- |                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Purple cabbage | Eggplant    |
| Blueberries    | Figs        |
| Blackberries   | Plums       |
| Boysenberries  | Dried plums |
| Concord grapes |             |

**Underline** the fruits and vegetables that you eat now.

**Circle**

the fruits and vegetables that you will try to add to your diet.



# Action Plan for Fruits and Veggies

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Eat one more fruit or veggie every day.

Eat fruit for dessert instead of ice cream, cookies or cake.

Eat a fruit or veggie that I have never tasted or that I disliked in the past.

Drink 100% or diluted fruit or vegetable juice instead of soda.

Eat fruit for a snack instead of potato chips or other high-calorie, low-nutrient snack food.

Choose raw fruits and vegetables at least once a day

My idea for improving my fruit and veggie intake:

Am Doing	Plan to Do
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_