Vegetables: Dark-Green Leafy, Deep Yellow, Dry Beans and Peas (legumes), Starchy Vegetables and Other Vegetables

Glenda L. Warren

Eat 3 to 5 servings of vegetables each day. Include all types of vegetables regularly.

What counts as one serving?

- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables (such as lettuce or spinach)
- ½ cup of chopped raw vegetables
- ½ cup of cooked vegetables
- ¾ cup of vegetable juice

Eat a variety of vegetables

It is important to eat many different vegetables. All vegetables provide dietary fiber, some provide starch and protein, and they are also sources of many vitamins and minerals.

- Dark-green vegetables provide: Vitamins A and C, riboflavin, folic acid, iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium. Examples: Beet greens, broccoli, collard greens, endive, escarole, kale, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, watercress.
- Deep yellow vegetables provide: Vitamin A. Examples: Carrots, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, winter squash.
- Dry Beans and Peas (legumes) provide: Thiamin, folic acid, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, potassium, protein, starch, fiber. Beans and peas can be used as meat alternatives since they are a source of protein. Examples: Black beans, black-eyed peas, chickpeas (garbanzos), kidney beans, lentils, lima beans (mature), mung beans, navy beans, pinto beans, split peas.
- Starchy vegetables provide: Starch and varying amounts of certain vitamins and minerals, such as niacin, vitamin B6, zinc, and
Vegetables provide a variety of vitamins and minerals essential for health.

Some Good Sources of Folate

- Dry beans (like red beans, navy beans, and soybeans), lentils, chickpeas, cow peas, and peanuts.
- Many vegetables, especially leafy greens (spinach, cabbage, brussels sprouts, romaine, looseleaf lettuce), peas, okra, sweet corn, beets, and broccoli.
- Fruits such as blackberries, boysenberries, kiwi fruit, oranges, plantains, strawberries, orange juice, and pineapple juice.

Some Good Sources of Carotenoids

- Dark-green leafy vegetables (such as spinach, collards, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens), broccoli, carrots, pumpkin and calabasa, red pepper, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes.
- Fruits like mango, papaya, cantaloupe.
- Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and provide many essential nutrients and other food components important for health. These foods are excellent sources of vitamin C, vitamin B6, carotenoids, including those which form vitamin A and folate.
- The antioxidant nutrients found in plant foods (e.g., vitamin C, carotenoids, vitamin E, and certain minerals) are presently of great interest to scientists and the public because of their potentially beneficial role in reducing the risk for cancer and certain other chronic diseases. Scientists are also trying to determine if other substances in plant foods protect against cancer.

Keeping Vegetables “Healthy”

Almost all vegetables are low in fat; vegetables do not have cholesterol. Here’s how to keep them that way.

Go easy on the fat added to vegetables at the table or during cooking. Added spreads or toppings, such as butter, mayonnaise, and salad dressing count as fat. Also toppings for salads such as cheese, sunflower seeds, and bacon bits add to the fat content.

- Serve vegetables plain. If you add butter, margarine, vegetable oil or fatty meat drippings, use only very small amounts. It is best to avoid fatty meat drippings and fatty meat.
- Season vegetables with herbs and spices rather than with sauces, butter, margarine, or fatty meat drippings.
- When cooking vegetables, if you add seasoned meats, choose lean meats and use only small amounts.
- Steam, boil, broil, or bake vegetables; or for a change, stirfry in a very small amount of vegetable oil.
- Avoid vegetables that are fried, because they are high in fat.
- Use nonfat or lowfat salad dressings, or use only small amounts of regular dressings.
- Try lemon juice on salads or use limited amounts of oil-based dressings.
Make it a habit . . .
et a variety of vegetables every day!

Prepare and Enjoy Vegetables - Raw

- **Raw** (with or without dips): Many vegetables taste good raw. Chill and eat them plain or try a lowfat dip with raw cauliflower, broccoli, carrot, green pepper, turnip, and rutabaga sticks or pieces. You can use green beans, zucchini, summer squash and many other raw veggies too.

- **Salads**: Use lots of dark green leafy vegetables in your salads. Try spinach, watercress, romaine, or other dark greens. Also, try raw green pepper strips or turnip slices or cold cooked peas, corn, chickpeas, or beets. Increase variety by serving greens tossed with fruit slices such as oranges, apples or pears. Use lowfat salad dressing instead of oily salad dressings and mayonnaise because they may add more fats and calories than you need.

Prepare and Enjoy Vegetables - Cooked

- **Steamed**: Try steaming vegetables. Use a steamer basket that fits into a saucepan. Put vegetables in the basket with water in the bottom of the pan, cover the pan with a tight fitting lid, and steam the vegetables until tender but still crisp and brightly colored. Water should not touch the steamer basket. You can also steam vegetables in the microwave oven.

- **Stirfried**: Try stirfrying. To stirfry vegetables, lightly coat the bottom of nonstick frypan with vegetable oil; heat the frypan; add vegetables; and stir gently until vegetables are tender-crisp. Use your imagination - many vegetables are good stirfried. For example, try summer squash, broccoli, cabbage, or asparagus. Use lower sodium soy sauce, lemon juice, or herbs to add flavor.

- **Boiled** (simmered is best): Vegetables taste great when you cook them the right way. Use only a little water, cook for a short time, cook at a low temperature and use little or no fat or salt.

- **Broiled**: Vegetables like onions, zucchini, and tomatoes can be broiled. It is a quick way of cooking foods under direct heat without added fat. Place vegetables in broiling pan or rack set in a shallow pan and broil until tender.

- **Baked**: Potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squashes, and onions can be baked. Simply wash, prick skins, and place vegetables in a baking sheet in oven.

Remember these tips and choose 3-5 servings of various vegetables and vegetable juices every day:

- Choose dark-green leafy and deep-yellow vegetables often.
- Eat dry beans, peas, and lentils often.
- Eat starchy vegetables, such as potatoes and corn.
- Prepare and serve vegetables with little or no fats.

Buying Tips for Vegetables

- Watch for good buys on fresh vegetables in season.
- Buy plain canned or plain frozen vegetables instead of those with added seasonings and sauces or boil-in-bag packages. Also because canned vegetables are often high in sodium, try those with “low-sodium” or no salt added.
• Look for large bags of frozen vegetables. They may be bargains and you can pour out the exact amount you need.

• Choose fresh vegetables that are clean and firm with smooth skins, and crisp and fresh with no yellow leaves.

• Get frozen foods last so they will stay solid until you get home. Choose packages that are frozen hard. Wet, limp, or stained packages may have been thawed and refrozen.

• Do not buy cans that are bulging or badly dented.

Choose foods from each of five food groups

The Food Guide Pyramid illustrates the importance of balance among food groups in a daily eating pattern. Most of the daily servings of food should be selected from the food groups that are the largest in the picture and closest to the base of the Pyramid.

• Choose most of your foods from the grain products group (6-11 servings), the vegetable group (3-5 servings), and the fruit group (2-4 servings).

• Eat moderate amounts of foods from the milk group (2-3 servings) and the meat and bean group (2-3 servings).

• Choose sparingly foods that provide few nutrients and are high in fat and sugars.

Food Guide Pyramid

A Guide to Daily Food Choices

Note: A range of servings is given for each food group. The smaller number is for people who consume about 1,600 calories a day, such as many sedentary women. The larger number is for those who consume about 2,800 calories a day, such as active men.

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.