

SPROUT*Q*

**Benefits of eating fruits and
vegetables**

Healthy Diet

A healthy diet is integral to having a healthy functioning body as what you eat will reflect your overall health as it is the nutrients you are providing for your body that will determine what your body will use.

Vegetables are healthy because they are usually low on calories and are high in nutrients such as vitamins and minerals and antioxidants.

The USDA (United States Dietary Association) instead of pushing the food pyramid that was popularized in previous years is pushing the myPlate movement.

Shown in the next slide

MyPlate, My Health

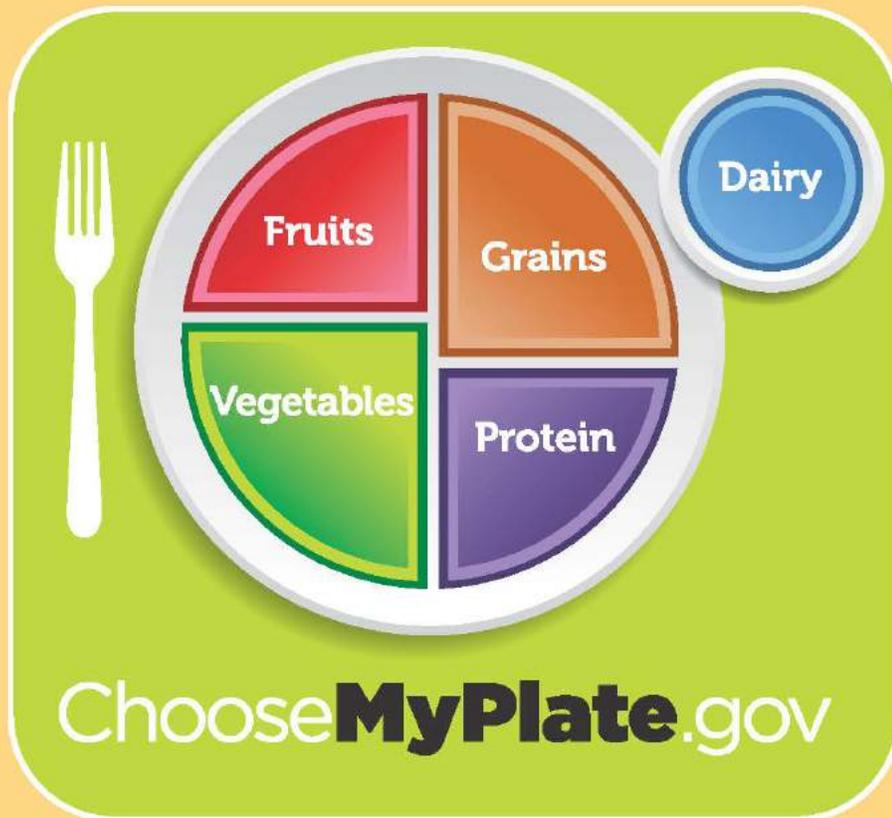
Your food and physical activity choices each day affect your health—how you feel today, tomorrow and in the future. These tips and ideas are a starting point. Choose a change that you can make today, and move toward a healthier you.

- Find your balance between food and physical activity

- Focus on fruit

- Vary your veggies

- Keep food safe to eat



- Get your calcium-rich foods

- Make at least half your grains whole grains

- Go lean with protein

Make physical activity a regular part of your day.

Choose activities you enjoy and can do regularly, whether it's swimming, yoga, dancing or soccer. And, encourage your family and friends to move with you. Every little bit adds up and doing something is better than doing nothing.

Vitamins

Various vitamins, such as C and A, help keep eyes, skin, teeth and gums healthy, fight infection and promote wound healing.

Citrus fruits are well known to contain high amounts of Vitamin C like Oranges and prevents the infamous disease scurvy which is a vitamin C deficiency which was common among people sailing the seas without sufficient vitamin C in their diet.

Vitamin A is abundant in carrots and kale, this is important as it helps keep the eyes healthy as it contributes a fantastic source of eye vitamins for macular degeneration and cataracts. In carrots is also Rhodopsin which is a purple pigment that helps us see in low light environments. Without it, it would make seeing in the dark more difficult than usual.



Antioxidants

Perhaps most importantly, vegetables are rich in a particular group of nutrients called antioxidants, which fight cellular damage and help prevent heart disease, cancer, Parkinson's disease, atherosclerosis, heart attack and Alzheimer's disease.

Antioxidants are intimately involved in the prevention of cellular damage -- the common pathway for cancer, aging, and a variety of diseases

Free radicals are atoms or groups of atoms with an odd (unpaired) number of electrons and can be formed when oxygen interacts with certain molecules. Once formed these highly reactive radicals can start a chain reaction, like dominoes. Their chief danger comes from the damage they can do when they react with important cellular components such as DNA, or the cell membrane. Cells may function poorly or die if this occurs. To prevent free radical damage the body has a defense system of *antioxidants*

Prunes are especially rich in antioxidants and can contain as dried prunes can contain as many as 7000 different types of antioxidants in half a cup of prunes.



Fiber

A substantial benefit of vegetables is dietary fiber. Fiber is an important nutrient found only in plant foods. As part of a healthy diet, fiber helps scour bad cholesterol out of your arteries, thus lowering your risk of heart disease, says the USDA.

Fiber also keeps your digestive system running smoothly, helps control your blood sugar levels and may help prevent cancer.

Whole grains are high in fiber and important for a vegetarian's protein intake. Vegetarians tend to eat whole grains and beans both of which are high in fiber to complement their proteins, so that their bodies process them as complete proteins

As for fruits, apples have high fiber content but its all in the apple peel. Bananas, oranges and strawberries also have relatively high fiber content.



Diet Friendly Characteristics

Vegetables are also a boon to dieters. Because they are generally low in fat and calories, you can eat a lot of them without gaining weight. If you substitute vegetables for other, higher-calorie foods in your diet, you'll slash your calorie and fat intake, making weight management easier.

The fiber in vegetables also helps you manage your weight. Fiber makes you feel fuller for a longer period, helping you eat less overall and aiding with weight loss or maintenance.

Example Diet

Food Group Amounts for 2,000 Calories a Day

				
<p>2 cups</p>	<p>2 1/2 cups</p>	<p>6 ounces</p>	<p>5 1/2 ounces</p>	<p>3 cups</p>
<p>Focus on whole fruits</p> <p>Focus on whole fruits that are fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.</p>	<p>Vary your veggies</p> <p>Choose a variety of colorful fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables—make sure to include dark green, red, and orange choices.</p>	<p>Make half your grains whole grains</p> <p>Find whole-grain foods by reading the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list.</p>	<p>Vary your protein routine</p> <p>Mix up your protein foods to include seafood, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, soy products, eggs, and lean meats and poultry.</p>	<p>Move to low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt</p> <p>Choose fat-free milk, yogurt, and soy beverages (soy milk) to cut back on your saturated fat.</p>



Limit

Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. Limit:

- Sodium to 2,300 milligrams a day.
- Saturated fat to 22 grams a day.
- Added sugars to 50 grams a day.

Be active your way: Children 6 to 17 years old should move 60 minutes every day. Adults should be physically active at least 2 1/2 hours per week.

Use SuperTracker to create a personal plan based on your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level.

SuperTracker.usda.gov