

5 a Day in the Month of May

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USDA's MyPlate recommends that we fill half our plates with fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are low in calories, naturally low in fat and cholesterol, full of fiber, and may help reduce the risk of chronic disease including heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and certain kinds of cancers. Another reason to enjoy fruits and vegetables is they are full of nutrients. VITAMIN A keeps eyes healthy and helps to prevent against infection. VITAMIN C keeps gums healthy and helps heal cuts. It also aids in the absorption of iron. IRON is needed for healthy blood. FOLATE reduces the risk of spinal cord birth defects during pregnancy. FIBER helps promote bowel regularity and lowers cholesterol. CALCIUM is essential

for healthy bones and teeth. POTASSIUM helps maintain healthy blood pressure, reduces the risk of developing kidney stones, and helps decrease bone loss. MAGNESIUM is needed for healthy bones and is responsible for over 300 different chemical reactions in your body! If you are not eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, you are missing out on all these benefits. A good rule of thumb is to eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.



Tips for Including More Fruits and Vegetables in Your Diet

- Keep whole fruit visible on the kitchen counter.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, or canned so that there is always some on hand.
- Make convenience packs of pre-cut fruits and veggies for quick on-the-go snacks.
- Top cereal or yogurt with fresh fruit at breakfast.
- Add fruit, like peaches or pineapple, to BBQ kabobs.
- Choose baked apple, baked pears, or a fruit cup for dessert.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick, easy cooking.
- Buy vegetables in season for increased savings and freshness.
- Try a main dish salad for lunch or add a small side salad to dinner meals nightly.
- Add color to your plate by choosing a large variety of vegetables.
- Pick up a new vegetable to try each time you go to the grocery store.
- Replace the meat on your pizza with veggies.

Make it a goal this month to start eating at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily! For more information visit a registered dietitian and/or check out www.eatright.org, www.choosemyplate.gov, and www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org.



Alyssa Claxton is a dietetic intern at WVU Healthcare and member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. She plans to become a registered dietitian. As the nation's food and nutrition experts, registered dietitians are committed to improving the health of their communities. To find a registered dietitian in your area, visit

www.eatright.org and click on "Find a Registered Dietitian."