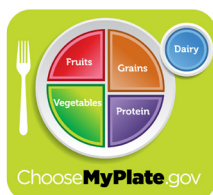


MyPlate: Vegetable Group

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MyPlate, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) food guide system, helps individuals use the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans to make smart choices from every food group. The MyPlate message about fruit is, “*Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.*” MyPlate includes an interactive, online guide that provides individuals with recommended food amounts to eat, based on gender, age, and physical activity level. Personalized guides can be found at www.Choosemyplate.gov under the “SuperTracker and Other Tools” tab.

This publication describes ways to incorporate healthful vegetables into the diet.

Vegetables bring color, texture and flavor to meals. More importantly, vegetables provide folate, vitamins A and C, minerals such as potassium, dietary fiber, antioxidants, and many phytochemicals. Vegetables generally are low in calories.



Why Eat Vegetables?

Americans typically eat only 59 percent of the recommended amounts of vegetables, affecting their overall health. Eating the recommended amounts of nutrient-rich vegetables has positive health benefits. Research has shown that people who eat generous amounts of fruits and vegetables as part of a healthful eating pattern have reduced risk of certain health problems. Some of the health benefits gained by eating a diet rich in a variety of vegetables include:

- reduced risk for stroke, coronary heart disease, and other cardiovascular diseases

- reduced markers of inflammation and oxidative stress in adults
- reduced risk of type 2 diabetes
- protection from certain types of cancer
- reduced risk of developing kidney stones
- increased protection from bone loss
- help with weight management

Vegetable Diet Recommendations

With MyPlate, any vegetable or vegetable juice is part of the **Vegetable Food Group**. Vegetables are the edible part of plants and can be raw, cooked, canned, frozen, or dried. One cup of raw, cooked or juiced vegetable; or two cups of raw leafy green vegetables count as one cup from the Vegetable Food Group. For a healthy eating pattern, while staying within an individual’s calorie needs, the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends increasing vegetable intake and eating a variety of vegetables, especially dark green, red and orange vegetables, and beans and peas. Most people should aim to eat at least 2½ cups of vegetables each day. However, the exact amount of food from the vegetable group that you need to eat depends on your gender, age, and how physically activity you are. From www.Choosemyplate.gov find the daily calories and cups of vegetables that are recommended for you. See *Table 1* for general guidelines.

Table I. Daily Recommendations*

	<i>Age</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>
Children	2-3 years old 4-8 years old	1 cup 1½ cups
Girls	9-13 years old 14-18 years old	2 cups 2½ cups
Boys	9-13 years old 14-18 years old	2½ cups 3 cups
Women	19 -30 years old 31- 50 years old 50+ years old	2½ cups 2½ cups 2 cups
Men	19 -30 years old 31- 50 years old 50+ years old	3 cups 3 cups 2½ cups

*These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond normal daily activities. Those who are more physically active may be able to consume more while staying within calorie needs.

Color Your Plate with Vegetables

For the most healthful diet, regularly eat dark green, red, and orange vegetables, and dry beans (legumes). This colorful variety of vegetables will help provide the full range of vitamins, fiber, and minerals that your body needs. Vegetables are organized into five subgroups based on their nutrient content. *Table II* provides information about the

Table II. Vegetable Subgroup and recommended weekly amount

	<i>Vegetables in Subgroup</i>	<i>Nutrition benefit</i>
Dark Green Vegetables 1½ cups per week	Bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dark green leafy lettuce, kale, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, watercress	Dark green vegetables are rich in calcium needed for healthy bones and teeth.
Orange/Red Vegetables 5½ cups per week	Acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, hubbard squash, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, red peppers, tomatoes	Foods high in beta-carotene, which is turned into vitamin A in the body, help protect against infection and some cancers.
Dry Peas and Beans (Legumes) 1½ cups per week	Black beans, black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans, kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, navy beans, pinto beans, soy beans, split peas, tofu, white beans	Iron, found in legumes, is needed by the body to build blood.
Starchy Vegetables 5 cups per week	Green peas, corn, potatoes, taro root, water chestnuts	Vegetables provide a wide range of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals.
Other Vegetables 4 cups per week	Green beans, artichokes, asparagus, bean sprouts, beets, onions, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, okra, parsnips, celery, turnips, cucumbers, eggplant, green or yellow peppers, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, summer squash, vegetable juice, zucchini	All vegetables are sources of fiber which aids digestion, lowers cholesterol, stabilizes blood sugar, and protects from colon cancer.

different subgroups of vegetables and the recommended weekly amounts of each group to fit into a 2,000 calorie diet. Vegetables are popular with people who watch their weight because they are low in calories and fat, and high in fiber. However, some ways of preparing vegetables may add extra fat. For example, fried or buttered vegetables have many more calories and fat than steamed vegetables. Cheeses, cream sauces, and salad dressings also add extra fat. Keep calories low by limiting added fat, and by eating fresh, roasted, grilled, or steamed vegetables.

Including Vegetables on a Tight Budget

- To prevent throwing out spoiled food, shop smart by selecting fresh vegetables for the first four days of the week and selecting canned or frozen vegetables for the remainder of the week. Vegetables in season are fresher and often more affordable.
- Vegetables with the least processing are usually more affordable too. For example, fresh whole carrots cost about one-third that of cleaned baby carrots.
- If children help select vegetables at the grocery store or help prepare vegetables, they are more likely to eat them. Also, allow children to choose the kinds of vegetables they eat by offering two to three choices for meals and snacks.
- A very economical choice is dry beans or legumes, costing about 10 cents per half-cup serving. Although dry beans require a long cooking time, they need not

Tips to Eat More Vegetables

- Include vegetables in all meals and snacks.
- Add a vegetable salad or side dish to your lunches and evening meals.
- Make salads with at least five types of colorful vegetables.
- Try a main dish salad or stir-fry with vegetables.
- Add sliced vegetables to breakfast burritos or breakfast omelets.
- Keep ready-to-eat vegetables in your refrigerator.
- Pack vegetables in snack packs to take with you.
- Load up stews and soups with extra vegetables.
- Grill vegetable kabobs or vegetables in foil as part of a barbecue meal.
- Include chopped vegetables in pasta sauce for lasagna.
- Top sandwiches with greens, tomatoes, cucumber, and other vegetables.
- Shred carrots or zucchini into meatloaf, casseroles, quick breads, and muffins.
- Try a low-fat or fat-free dressing as a dip with raw broccoli, green peppers, celery, carrots or cauliflower.
- When eating out choose a vegetable to substitute for a high-fat side dish.
- Each week select a new vegetable at the grocery store to purchase and try.

take much time to prepare. Cook beans in a pressure cooker, following the directions provided, or use a crock pot. For the crock pot, cover 1 cup beans with 2½ cups of water and cook overnight on low setting. In the morning, drain off liquid and add seasonings and the remainder of recipe ingredients with enough liquid to cover the beans. Cook on low until lunch or dinner time.

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