

# NUTRITION “EAT WELL” WEEK



## HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO EAT ALL THOSE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES?

Or...20 plus ways to add produce to your life.

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables can help protect against a wide range of chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease and various cancers. Americans are encouraged to eat at least eight servings of some combination of fruits and vegetables every day. Yet only 20 percent of Americans eat five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables, and a mere 5 percent consume seven servings.

With actual consumption so low, it might seem that asking a person to consume eight daily servings of produce – more than twice what the average American now eats – is an impractical demand, if not a downright impossible one. In fact, it can be surprisingly easy to accommodate eight or more daily servings of fruits or vegetables, especially if you regularly eat three meals a day. Here are some suggestions for adding produce to your life.

### BREAKFAST: GET OFF TO A GOOD START

1. Start with juice. Just 6 ounces of 100 percent juice (not fruit “drink”) counts as a serving.
2. Add some sliced banana, berries, prunes, raisins, or other fruit to your cereal –hot or cold. It takes only a quarter cup of dried fruit, a half cup of berries, or one medium piece of fruit like a banana to make a full serving.
3. Mix berries or sliced apples or bananas into pancake mix or waffle batter and then top with extra fruit.
4. Create a vegetable omelette – perhaps a Spanish omelette with onions, peppers, and tomatoes, or any other combination that appeals to you. Half a cup of chopped vegetables like onions and peppers equals a serving.
5. If you breakfast on bread or toast, try an open-faced sandwich of low-fat cottage cheese and fresh fruit (banana, melon, blueberries, or strawberries) or vegetables (onion, summer squash or green or red peppers).

### WHAT'S IN A SERVING?

Seven daily servings may sound less like the seven deadly sins once you know what constitutes a “serving”. Among nutritionists, that’s a technical term defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For fruits and vegetables, one serving equals:

- 1 cup raw leafy vegetables.
- ½ cup other raw or cooked vegetables
- 1 medium piece of fruit
- ½ cup berries or diced fruit
- ¼ cup dried fruit
- ¾ (6 oz) juice.

There are exceptions, of course. One medium watermelon, for example, would make an awfully large serving; a 1-inch, half-moon shaped slice is plenty. Here are serving sizes for a few more odd pieces of produce, according to American Dietetic Association:

- Acorn Squash: half an average squash
- Cantaloupe: one-third average melon
- Carrots: one average carrot
- Celery: one large or two small stalks
- Grapefruit: one-half average grapefruit

Remember that all of those standards are meant to be guidelines; don’t get too hung up on determining exact serving sizes. What really counts is just to eat more fruit and vegetables every single day.

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Or...20 plus ways to add produce to your life (continued).

- Build a salad on chicory, romaine, or spinach. (Not on iceberg lettuce, one of the most popular and least nutritious of all vegetable greens.) One cup of a raw leafy vegetable makes one serving.
- That salad becomes two servings with the addition of just half a cup of any combination of such ingredients as broccoli, carrot, celery, cucumber, mushrooms, peppers, or tomatoes.
- Turn yogurt into a full serving of fruit by adding a half cup of berries or a chopped piece of fruit.
- Use vegetables like broccoli, celery, and green and red peppers to add texture and color to pasta and rice salads.
- Add tomatoes, shredded carrots, or bean sprouts to sandwiches.

### DINNER: THE MAIN DISH – AND BEYOND

- Complement poultry and pork with generous helpings of tart fruits such as cranberries, green apples, oranges, or raspberries.
- A half cup of tomato sauce counts as a serving of cooked vegetable.

### BEFORE, AFTER, IN BETWEEN

- Have a slice of melon, a half grapefruit, or – if you can spare the preparation time – a half cup of fruit salad as a prelude to any meal.
- Prepare fruit desserts such as poached pears and baked apples.
- If you have ice cream or cake, top it with berries or sliced apples, bananas, peaches, or plums.
- Skip the preparation altogether and just have a piece of fresh fruit.
- Snack on grapes, strawberries, melon balls, sliced kiwi, and other bite-sized pieces of fruit.
- Don't stop at carrot and celery sticks. Raw broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, summer squash, and red and green peppers all offer flavor and texture. You can use them to replace chips for dipping – and use vegetable salsa for the dip.

### EATING ON THE RUN

If you frequently skip meals or eat on the run, squeezing more servings of fruits and vegetables into your diet will require a little extra planning.

- Stock up on dried fruits and frozen fruits and vegetables.
- Keep a supply of carrot and celery sticks and other cut up vegetables stored in water in the refrigerator.
- If you brown-bag it, bring raw vegetables as a side dish.
- Instead of coffee, tea, or soda on beverage breaks, drink fruit or vegetable juices. Stock up on small boxes or cans that can travel easily.
- Replace or at least supplement snacks with fruits. Apples and oranges travel well, as do boxes of raisins and bags of dried fruit.

### ADDING IT ALL UP

As you start to include the strategies we've described here in your culinary repertoire, you'll find those servings add up quickly. For example, shown below are partial menus for three sample days – just the produce portions – that offer not just seven, but a full nine daily servings of fruits and vegetables. And it wouldn't take much finagling to add even more.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast	Slice of melon Open-faced sandwich or fruit and cottage cheese	Orange juice Cereal with fruit	Half grapefruit Vegetable omelette
Lunch	Vegetable juice Piece of fruit	Yogurt with fruit Salad	Fruit juice Sandwich with added vegetables
Snack	Vegetable sticks	Grapes	Raisins
Dinner	Fruit cup Salad Glazed vegetable Baked Apple	Vegetable soup Sweet potato Pineapple salsa (for fish) Poached Pear	Vegetable appetizer Salad Tomato sauce (for pasta) Piece of fruit

