

can cook most vegetables in just a few minutes if you steam, stir fry or microwave them.

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English
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Fitting more fruit and vegetables into your diet

NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service
Website: <http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au>
Email: mhcs@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au
Tel: (02) 9816 0347



Fitting more fruit and vegetables into your diet

If you're not eating at least two pieces of fruit and five servings of vegetables each day, now's the time to start. Although there's no single "miracle" food to prevent or cure cancer, scientists know fruit and vegetables have some protective effect against this and other diseases. They also know that people who eat few fruits and vegetables have higher rates of cancer than those who don't. Although some people think they can get the same benefits from vitamin and mineral supplements, this isn't true. Vegetables and fruits don't just contain vitamins and minerals, but also many other substances which are important for good health and which you won't find in a pill.

Australia has such a variety of fruit and vegetables available that it's not hard to fit plenty of them into the family's diet. Here are some ideas

Add fruit at breakfast. Bananas, kiwi fruit, strawberries or dried fruit combine well with breakfast cereal. In a hurry? A piece of fruit with bread, toast or cooked rice makes a good quick breakfast - so do smoothies or milkshakes, made by adding soft fruit to milk and yoghurt in a blender.

Be adventurous. It's easy to get into a rut, buying the same vegetables and cooking them in the same ways. But experiment with vegetables you've never eaten before - or use familiar vegetables in unfamiliar ways. Try a little mashed avocado instead of butter or margarine as a spread on bread - it has less fat and more nutrients, as well as more flavour. We're all familiar with grated carrot, but have you tried grating other vegetables like zucchini, beetroot or red cabbage and adding them to salads or sandwiches, or tried baking beetroot or sweet potatoes in their skins?

Add extra vegetables to salads, soups, stir-fries, casseroles and curries.

Many traditional cuisines base dishes on vegetables with just a little meat, poultry or fish - this is a good habit to keep. Remember that the more different colours you have on your plate, the healthier the meal. Bright colours in natural foods like tomatoes, capsicums, carrots, sweet potatoes and green vegetables mean they contain antioxidants - food substances that help prevent disease. The deeper the colour, the healthier the food.

Get children into the habit of snacking on fruit. The earlier you start, the easier it is to get them used to eating fruit as a snack at home or at school, rather than eating something from a packet. It's a good habit that will help them grow up healthy. Try and have a variety of different fruits so they don't get bored with the same thing. Make fruit salad with a variety of different fruits for dessert - again, the more colours you can combine, the better. In warmer weather, fruits like grapes or peeled bananas taste great when frozen.

Let children help prepare fruit and vegetables. It's all part of learning to enjoy these foods - and a first step in learning how to cook.

Share a piece of fruit. Children who might balk at eating a whole apple, will often happily eat a piece if you cut it up and share it. It's a good strategy to use with the men in the family too - research into food habits has found that many men are more likely to eat fruit if it's cut up.

The next time you think time is too short to eat properly, remember that fruit and vegetables can be among the most convenient foods around. Fruits like bananas, apples, pears, or mandarins are easy to carry and need no preparation, and you