

Vegetables for health

Improve your health by increasing your intake of vegetables.

According to official US dietary guidelines, you should eat three to five servings of vegetables daily. Very few people meet this target, and miss out on one of the most potent ways of improving health and preventing disease.

Vital nutrients

Vegetables are excellent sources of vitamins C (see p.56) and A (in the form of its precursor, beta-carotene, see p.52). Both vitamins help keep your skin and eyes healthy and your bones strong, and help fight infection. They work with other vitamins and minerals to keep muscles healthy.

In addition, vegetables are an excellent source of folate (see p.56), potassium (see p.63), and

Naturally healthy Include a wide variety of vegetables in your daily diet to benefit from their potent, health-giving properties.

fiber, which plays an important role in the diet: studies show a reduced incidence of cardiovascular disease in countries where a high-fiber diet is the norm.

Fiber also helps keep the intestinal tract in good working order and may help reduce the risk of colon cancer (see p.259). In addition, a high-fiber diet is often low in fat while providing a feeling of satiety, or fullness, without adding unnecessary calories. Because of this quality, fiber can play a vital role in weight control (see pp.48–49).

What is a serving?

Three to five servings each day are recommended from the vegetable group. Examples of vegetable servings include:

- 1 cup cooked carrots
- 1 cup cooked green beans
- 1 cup cooked spinach
- ½ cup cooked Brussels sprouts
- ½ cup cooked mushrooms
- 1 cup shredded lettuce
- ½ cup chopped tomatoes

Increasing your vegetable intake

Vegetables are packed with vitamins and minerals and provide a great source of fiber (*right*), so try to eat at least three servings a day. This is not as hard as it may seem. Eat raw vegetables, such as bell peppers, celery, and lettuce, as often as possible, to benefit from their optimum nutritional content. Otherwise, you should use a cooking method that minimizes loss of nutrients (*opposite above*).

Always include a vegetable in your sandwich filling, and try dishes based on vegetables rather than meat. (See page 296 for a key to the abbreviations used for vitamins and minerals in the chart.)

VEGETABLE	SERVING	FIBER	VITAMINS/MINERALS
Artichoke	1 large	4.5	A, Fol / K
Broccoli	½ cup	2.8	A, Fol, C / Ca
Brussels sprouts	½ cup	3.8g	A, C / K
Carrots	½ cup	2.6g	A, Fol / K
Collard greens	½ cup	4.0g	A, Fol / Ca, Mg, K
Green beans	½ cup	0g	A, Fol / K
Green peas	½ cup	4.4g	A, Fol / K
Lima beans	½ cup	6.6g	Fol / Mg, K
Spinach	½ cup	2.7g	A, Fol / Ca, Mg, K, Fe
Zucchini squash	½ cup	3.0g	A / K

Source:

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