

Fruit and vegetable - types

Fruit and vegetables are an important part of your daily diet. They are naturally good and contain vitamins and minerals that can help to keep you healthy. Vegetables and fruit also contain other compounds, antioxidants or phytochemicals, which help protect the body against diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. There are many varieties of fruit and vegetables available. Eat five kinds of vegetable and two kinds of fruit every day for good health.

Types of fruit

Fruit is the sweet, fleshy, edible portion of a plant. It generally contains seeds. Fruits are usually eaten raw, although some varieties can be cooked. They come in a wide variety of colours, shapes and flavours. Common types of fruits that are readily available include:

- **Apples and pears**
- **Citrus** – oranges, grapefruits, mandarins and limes
- **Stonefruit** – nectarines, apricots, peaches and plums
- **Tropical and exotic** – bananas and mangoes
- **Berries** – strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, kiwifruit and passionfruit
- **Melons** – watermelons, rock melons and honey dew melons
- **Tomatoes and avocados.**

Types of vegetables

Vegetables are often cooked, although some kinds (salad vegetables) are eaten raw. Vegetables are available in many varieties and can be classified into biological groups or 'families', including:

- **Leafy green** – lettuce, spinach and silverbeet
- **Cruciferous** – cabbage, cauliflower, brussel sprouts and broccoli
- **Marrow** – pumpkin, cucumber and zucchini
- **Root** – potato, sweet potato and yam
- **Edible plant stem** – celery and asparagus
- **Allium** – onion, garlic and shallot.

Legumes

Legumes or pulses contain nutrients that are especially valuable. Legumes need to be cooked before they are eaten – this improves their nutritional quality, aids digestion and eliminates any harmful toxins. Legumes come in many forms including:

- **Soy products** – tofu (bean curd) and soybeans
- **Legume flours** – chickpea flour (besan), lentil flour and soy flour
- **Dried beans and peas** – haricot beans, red kidney beans, chickpeas and lentils
- **Fresh beans and peas** – green peas, green beans, butter beans, broad beans and snow peas.

Colour is the key to healthy food

Maximum health and protection against disease comes from eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines recommend that adults eat at least five kinds of vegetable and two kinds of fruit every day.

Foods of similar colours generally contain similar protective compounds so try to eat a rainbow of colourful fruits and vegetables every day to get the full range of health benefits. For example:

- **Red foods** – like tomatoes and watermelon contain lycopene, which is thought to be important for fighting prostate cancer and heart disease.
- **Green vegetables** – like spinach and kale contain lutein and zeaxanthin, which may help protect against age-related eye disease.
- **Blue and purple foods** – like blueberries and eggplant contain anthocyanins, which may help protect the body from cancer.
- **White foods** – like cauliflower contain sulforaphane, which may also help protect against some cancers.

Where to get help

- An accredited practising dietitian, Dietitians Association of Australia.
- Nutrition Australia.
- Heart Foundation.
- Your doctor.
- Maternal and child health nurse.

Things to remember

- Fruits and vegetables contain important vitamins, minerals and 'plant chemicals'.
- There are many varieties of fruit and vegetables available.
- Eat five kinds of vegetable and two kinds of fruit every day for good health.
- A diet high in fruit and vegetables can help protect against cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

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