

## Fruit and vegetables - benefits

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. Research shows they can also help protect against some diseases. Most Australians will benefit from eating more fruit and vegetables as part of a well-balanced, regular diet and a healthy active lifestyle.

### Vitamins and minerals

Fruits and vegetables contain many vitamins and minerals that are good for your health. These include vitamins A (beta-carotene), C and E, magnesium, zinc, phosphorous and folic acid. Research into folic acid shows that it may reduce blood levels of homocysteine, a substance that may be a risk factor for coronary heart disease.

### Eat more fruit and vegetables for your health

Fruits and vegetables are low in fat, salt and sugar and provide a good source of dietary fibre. As part of a well-balanced, regular diet and a healthy active lifestyle, a high intake of fruit and vegetables can help:

- Reduce obesity and maintain a healthy weight
- Lower your cholesterol
- Lower your blood pressure.

### Protect against diseases

Vegetables and fruit contain phytochemicals, or 'plant chemicals'. These biologically active substances can help to protect you from some diseases. Scientific research shows that if you regularly eat lots of fruit and vegetables, you have a lower risk of:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Stroke
- Heart (cardiovascular) disease – when fruits and vegetables are eaten as food, not taken as supplements
- Cancer – some forms of cancer, later in life
- High blood pressure (hypertension).

### Two fruits and five vegetables, every day

Different fruits and vegetables contain different nutrients. 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. Results from a national nutrition survey conducted by the Australian Government indicate that Australians of all ages do not eat enough vegetables and fruit.

Children have a smaller stomach capacity and higher energy needs. They will not be able to eat the same serving sizes as adults; however, they should be encouraged to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables and start good practices early in life. By eating well, your children will have the energy they need to play, concentrate better, learn, sleep better and build stronger teeth and bones. Building good habits in the early years can also provide the protection of a healthy diet throughout their lives.

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating has recommendations for how many vegetables and fruits adults, children and adolescents of different ages require.

## Where to get help

- Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
- Your local fresh food retailer – find your local retailer at Market Fresh
- Dietitians Association of Australia website Tel. 1800 812 942
- Nutrition Australia
- Heart Foundation
- Your doctor
- Maternal and child health nurse.

## Things to remember

- Fruits and vegetables contain important vitamins, minerals and 'plant chemicals'. They also contain fibre.
- Fruits and vegetables are low in fat, salt and added sugar.
- Most Australians do not eat enough fruit and vegetables.
- 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:**

Royal Children's Hospital - Nutrition Department

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