**Step Up Your Fruits & Veggies!**

Yes, we have all heard it again and again: eat your fruits and veggies! And we will say it yet again, because this is one of the most simple and effective ways to improve your nutrition. These simple foods are filled with vitamins, minerals and fiber. These nutrients will boost your immune system, improve your digestive system, increase your ability to heal and fight off infection, and decrease your susceptibility to other diseases. Fruit and vegetable intake has been associated with a lower risk for chronic disease including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke and certain kinds of cancer. Substituting fruits and vegetables for higher-calorie foods can also be a very effective way to maintain a healthy weight. With all the benefits that they include, why not step up your fruit and vegetable intake?

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| **EXAMPLES OF ½ CUP**   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Applesauce | 16 grapes | 1 medium cantaloupe wedge | | 1 snack container of applesauce (4oz) | 16 grapes | 1 medium cantaloupe wedge | |
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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 1/2 medium grapefruit | 4 large strawberries | 5 broccoli florets | | 1/2 medium grapefruit | 4 large strawberries | 5 broccoli florets | |

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| **EXAMPLES OF 1 CUP**   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Small apple | Large banana | 1 medium grapefruit | | 1 small apple | 1 large banana | 1 medium grapefruit | |
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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 1 medium potato | 2 large stalks of celery | 1 cup cooked greens or 2 cups raw (spinach, collards, mustard greens, turnip greens) | | 1 medium potato | 2 large stalks of celery | 1 cup cooked greens or 2 cups raw | |

The USDA recommends adults consume 2 cups of fruits and 2.5 cups of vegetables in a day. Though this number may seem intimidating, the serving sizes are relatively small – you may be eating more fruits and veggies than you think you are! One cup refers to a common measuring cup (the kind used in recipes). In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked veggies, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group. One cup 100% fruit juice or ½ cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group. Not too intimidating after all, huh?

**Benefits of Fruits and Vegetables (From www.cdc.gov)**

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| **Fiber** | |
| Diets rich in dietary fiber have been shown to have a number of beneficial effects including decreased risk of coronary artery disease. | **Excellent vegetable sources:**  navy beans, kidney beans, black beans, pinto beans, lima beans, white beans, soybeans, split peas, chick peas, black eyed peas, lentils, artichokes |

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| **Folate\*** | |
| Healthful diets with adequate folate may reduce a woman's risk of having a child with a brain or spinal cord defect. | **Excellent vegetable sources:**  black eyed peas, cooked spinach, great northern beans, asparagus |

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| **Potassium** | |
| Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain a healthy blood pressure. | **Good fruit and vegetable sources:**  sweet potatoes, tomato paste, tomato puree, beet greens, white potatoes, white beans, lima beans, cooked greens, carrot juice, prune juice |

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| **Vitamin A** | |
| Vitamin A keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps to protect against infections. | **Excellent fruit and vegetable sources:**  sweet potatoes, pumpkin, carrots, spinach, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, collard greens, winter squash, cantaloupe, red peppers, Chinese cabbage |

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| **Vitamin C** | |
| Vitamin C helps heal cuts and wounds and keep teeth and gums healthy. | **Excellent fruit and vegetable sources:**  red and green peppers, kiwi, strawberries, sweet potatoes, kale, cantaloupe, broccoli, pineapple, Brussels sprouts, oranges, mangoes, tomato juice, cauliflower |

\*\*\* Fruits and veggies have MANY benefits - Think of ways you can include them in your meals, and eat them thinking about all of the wonderful nutrients your body is getting! \*\*\*