

Fruity Facts!

WHY EAT MORE FRUIT?

Plant foods like fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, and pulses such as beans, are a vital component of a healthy balanced diet. Fruit is quick and easy to prepare, it can be cheap and is readily available for any meal or snack, making it nature's own 'fast food'.

Fruit contains a wide range of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, fibre and other phytochemicals that help to keep the body healthy and protect cells from damage that can lead to cancer.

Research shows that vegetables and fruits help to reduce our risk of a range of cancers. There is also good evidence that they help to lower the risk of heart disease, protect against stroke and high blood pressure and even help to manage diabetes.

We should all be aiming for 5 A DAY. On average children currently eat only two portions of vegetables and fruits a day, and adults only eat around three portions a day (Department of Health), so there's definitely room for improvement!

WHAT EXACTLY IS FRUIT?

Fruit is the fleshy and often sweet part of a flowering plant or tree that contains its seeds. Fruit can be eaten in a variety of different ways: raw, cooked, blended, puréed, juiced and dried.

There are many different types to try:

Stone fruits – such as peach, plum, apricot and cherry

Soft fruits – such as berries like raspberry, blueberry, blackberry, strawberry and currants like redcurrant and blackcurrant

Citrus fruits – such as orange, lemon, lime and grapefruit

Vine fruits – such as melon, grape and kiwifruit

Fleshy fruits – such as apple, pear and banana

Exotic fruits – such as mango, papaya, lychee, mangosteen, passion fruit and pomegranate

WHAT IS A PORTION?

One portion is 80g, which is approximately equivalent to:

1 slice of large fruit like melon or pineapple

1 whole medium-sized fruit like an apple or banana

2 whole small fruits like plums or kiwifruits

1-2 handfuls of smaller fruits like grapes or berries

1 heaped tablespoon of small dried fruit such as sultanas or raisins

2-3 medium-sized dried fruits such as apricots

1 glass (150ml) of pure fruit juice (juice only counts as one portion per day no matter how much you drink)

3 heaped tablespoons of cooked vegetables such as carrots, peas and sweetcorn

3 heaped tablespoons of beans and pulses (these only count as one portion per day)

1 cereal bowl of mixed salad

These portion sizes are for adults. Children should also eat at least five portions of different and colourful vegetables and fruits each day, but the portion sizes may be smaller. An easy way to remember portion sizes is to think of it as a handful – this works for both adults and children!

FOLLOW THE RAINBOW RULE

We all have our favourites! But to see the most health benefits it's important to eat a variety of different types of fruits (and vegetables) each day.

Eat a mix of fruit from each of the different colour groups. Here are some ideas:

GREEN – apple, grape, kiwifruit, pear, honeydew melon

RED – raspberry, rhubarb, strawberry, cherry

ORANGE – mango, orange, papaya, peach, nectarine, cantaloupe melon

YELLOW – lemon, grapefruit, pineapple

WHITE – banana, lychee, dragon fruit

PURPLE – blackberry, blackcurrant, plum

Many of the bright rainbow colours we see in fruit come from phytochemicals. By choosing a variety of different coloured foods, not only will our meals and snacks look more appetising but they will also provide us with the best possible mix of health-enhancing nutrients.

EASY WAYS TO 5 A DAY

Following one or two of these simple suggestions each day will boost your vegetable and fruit intake and make sure you're well on your way to 5 A DAY!

Breakfast

- Add a sliced banana, handful of berries or dried fruit to your cereal
- Make a fruit smoothie using unsweetened, low-fat yoghurt and fresh fruit

Healthy snacks

- A handful of grapes or cherry tomatoes
- 2 satsumas or plums
- An apple or pear
- Celery or carrot sticks with reduced fat houmous or salsa

Lunchtime

- Add lettuce, cucumber and sliced tomatoes to your sandwich
- Include a side salad with your jacket potato
- Have a vegetable soup
- Add chopped peppers, tomatoes or sweetcorn to pasta and rice salads

Main meal






- Include at least 2 portions of vegetables with main meals
- Add extra vegetables to curries, casseroles, pasta and rice dishes, and pizzas
- Base your meals around plant foods instead of meat. A good rule of thumb is to fill two thirds (or more) of your plate with wholegrains, beans, vegetables and fruits, and one third (or less) with animal foods

Desserts

- Make a fruit salad with different coloured fruits like plums, kiwifruit and melon
- Make a fruit crumble and serve with low-fat yoghurt or low-fat fromage frais
- Use different coloured chopped fruits to make fruit kebabs
- Make a delicious Tutti Frutti Surprise (see the recipe to the right)

TOP FRUIT TIPS

Fruit can be an inexpensive and delicious way to incorporate more plant foods into your diet. There are simple ways to make sure it is always available at home without going to waste.

-  Fresh, frozen, dried and tinned vegetables and fruits all count towards your 5 A DAY.
-  Always keep tinned varieties in your cupboard. Healthier choices are in natural juice or water with no added sugar or salt. Just add low-fat fromage frais or natural yoghurt for a delicious breakfast or dessert.
-  Buying berries and other small fruits frozen can be very cost-effective; you will get more for your money and they won't go off before you've had a chance to eat them. Sprinkle a handful onto your morning porridge – the heat will defrost them in no time.
-  If you have fruit that is unlikely to be eaten before it goes off, liquidise and freeze it as ice cubes. That way it is available any time – defrost and mix with low-fat natural yoghurt!
-  Instead of throwing away fruit that has gone past its best, use it to make a simple fruit compote. In a pan, warm up some apple juice and add your fruit. Simmer gently until the fruit is soft. Serve with porridge, low-fat yoghurt or a home-made granola topping.

Tutti Frutti Surprise

(serves 2, 159 kcals, 5.3g fat, 0.3g salt per serving)

A simple and delicious dessert that counts towards one of your 5 A DAY. Try out different types of fruit for more variety.

Ingredients

- **2 pieces fresh fruit (about 160g/6oz in total), peeled and chopped, or the same weight of soft fruits or tinned fruit salad**
- **1 x 150g (6oz) tub fat-free Greek yoghurt**
- **2 tablespoons of half-fat crème fraîche**
- **8 small amaretti biscuits**



Method

- 1) Crush the amaretti biscuits and stir into the blended fat-free Greek yoghurt and half-fat crème fraîche in a small bowl.
- 2) In 2 tall glasses, add some of the fruit, spoon over the yoghurt mixture, add some more fruit and repeat, finishing with the yoghurt mixture.
- 3) Chill and serve, decorated with a sprig of mint or a slice of fruit.

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