

Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

8 great ways to eat more veggies every day

I know I should be eating more vegetables, but I need inspiration. What are some easy ways to fit more vegetables into my diet?

You've already conquered the first hurdle: Making the decision to actually eat more vegetables. Now you need to get into the habit. Knowing how good they are for you should be just the motivation you need.

Vegetables provide vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants in a nice little package with relatively few calories or other pitfalls. Eating enough of them as part of an overall healthful diet can help prevent heart disease and some types of cancer.

Make sure you get a wide range of vegetables, such as dark green leafy greens and broccoli; red and orange vegetables, such as tomatoes, carrots and winter squash; legumes, including beans, edamame and chickpeas; starchy vegetables, including white potatoes, corn, plantains and green peas; and other kinds such as green beans, onions, cauliflower, cucumbers, celery, zucchini, mushrooms and peppers. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends working in all of these types of vegetables over the course of a week.

Unfortunately, most people don't eat the recommended 2 to 3 cups of vegetables every day. In fact, only 9 percent of us eat that amount, according to a 2015 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. So, here are some ideas for boosting your veggie intake:

- Start your day right by lightly sauteing sliced cherry tomatoes and a large handful of spinach and adding them to scrambled eggs. Next time, try finely chopped broccoli and red peppers.
- Boost the bulk and the nutrients in canned soup by adding canned or frozen vegetables.



image: iStock

- Making pasta? Saute some chopped onion, peppers, mushrooms, chopped spinach and summer squash. Stir them into the sauce along with some diced tomatoes.
- Like to dip? Use baby carrots to dip into hummus. It's great as a snack or as part of lunch.
- Create a wrap with a whole-grain tortilla filled with romaine lettuce, red cabbage, shredded carrots, pepper strips, cucumber and julienned zucchini. Spread the tortilla with smashed avocado and add a little salsa.
- Rinse off some asparagus, pat dry, coat with some olive oil and sprinkle with pepper. Broil the spears or place directly on the grill.
- Make it a habit to eat a salad at lunch or dinner each day. It could be as simple as leafy greens drizzled with some oil and balsamic. Or, add as many fresh vegetables as you like. You can make it a meal by loading on some chickpeas, edamame or other source of protein.
- Make a quick side dish by draining and rinsing a can of red or black beans and heating them with a little salsa. Another option: Drain a can of whole green beans and add some Italian-seasoned chopped tomatoes.

For more ideas, see the Fruits and Veggies: More Matters website at fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org. Choose "Meal Planning," and prepare to be inspired.

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