



Why Should You Eat Your Fruits & Veggies?



DIETS RICH IN FRUIT AND VEGETABLES MAY:

LOWER THE RISK FOR HEART DISEASE AND STROKE



Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. Fruits and vegetables contain potassium and fiber which decrease hypertension (high blood pressure), a leading cause of heart disease. Fruits and vegetables also contain vitamin C which strengthens blood vessels. Studies have shown an association between fruit and vegetable intake, particularly *cruciferous* (broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower) and *green leafy vegetables* and *citrus fruits*, and reduced risk for stroke.



PREVENT OR HELP CONTROL DIABETES

Type II diabetes used to be considered a disease of adulthood; now it is being diagnosed in children and young adults due to the epidemic levels of obesity and being overweight. Fruits and vegetables help control and prevent the development of type 2 diabetes and its complications—heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and kidney disease. The fiber provided by fruits and vegetables helps control weight and blood sugar levels.



DECREASE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



High blood pressure is one of the nation's most common health problems and can lead to stroke, heart disease, and kidney disease. Diets rich in fruits and vegetables have been shown to reduce blood pressure in people with high blood pressure. The potassium and magnesium minerals in fruits and vegetables help to minimize damage to arteries.



REDUCE THE RISK FOR CANCER



When oxygen is used by a cell, it produces a product called a free radical. Free radicals are charged particles that damage cells which can lead to diseases such as cancer. Antioxidants (which are available in fruits and vegetables) are able to donate an electron to neutralize the free radical and minimize its harmful effects. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of cancer.





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DECREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF BECOMING OBESE OR OVERWEIGHT

Obesity is a risk factor for many chronic diseases, including heart disease and diabetes. Replacing high-calorie, high-fat foods with fruits and vegetables can help achieve and maintain a healthy weight. In addition to being relatively low in calories, the significant water and fiber content in fruits and vegetables aids in weight control by helping you feel full, thus reducing your total calorie intake.

DECREASE THE RISK OF DEVELOPING DIVERTICULOSIS AND OTHER GASTROINTESTINAL (GI) DISORDERS

Diverticulosis is an intestinal disorder which may be worsened by inadequate fiber in the diet. Many fruits and vegetables provide insoluble fiber that helps maintain normal bowel function, reducing the risk for diverticulosis and other GI disorders.

MINIMIZE BIRTH DEFECTS

Women of child-bearing age with diets low in folic acid are at greater risk of having children with certain types of birth defects. Many fruits and vegetables—especially dark green leafy vegetables and citrus fruits—as well as dried beans and fortified grain products contain folic acid.

PROMOTE HEALTHY AGING

Fruits and vegetables provide beneficial compounds to keep all of the vital systems in your body working efficiently throughout the years. These beneficial compounds may protect against Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and help to reduce skin wrinkling associated with aging.

PROTECT VISION

Substantial evidence suggests that consuming high levels of antioxidants—vitamin C and carotenoids—are associated with delayed development of various forms of cataracts. Fruits and vegetables—especially carrots, broccoli, sweet potatoes, squash, red bell peppers, cantaloupe, mango, and dark leafy vegetables—contain beta-carotene (a carotenoid). Beta-carotene specifically has been associated with a lower risk of cataracts.

REDUCE BAD CHOLESTEROL

The liver produces bile acids out of circulating blood cholesterol. Soluble fiber in fruits and vegetables decreases blood cholesterol by binding these bile acids and excreting them. This process, in turn, decreases the amount of circulating cholesterol that can lead to atherosclerosis (plaque in the arteries).