



Working TOWARD Wellness

LIVE BETTER. LIVE LONGER.

W E L L N E S S B R O C H U R E

VEGETABLES AND FRUIT



NATURALLY NUTRITIOUS AND DELICIOUS

“Eat your veggies!” Many of us can remember being told as children to eat more vegetables and fruit. Besides mom and dad telling us, fast food giants like McDonald’s are now promoting vegetables and fruit by marketing and selling their own versions right along side their menus of burgers and fries.

While increasing the availability of vegetables and fruit at fast food restaurants is a good thing, the truth is that most of our food is still purchased in grocery stores and prepared and/or eaten at home. So, it’s up to us to shop for and figure out how and where we can increase our intake of vegetables and fruit.

Researchers agree with our parents that eating adequate amounts of vegetables and fruit on a daily basis provides lots of health benefits, for growing children as well as adults. Yet, the bad news is that almost two-thirds of Windsor-Essex residents, 12 years of age and older, eat vegetables and fruit less than five times a day. The challenge is, how do we find ways to eat more of these nutritious amazing foods?

Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends that we eat 5-10 servings of vegetables and fruit every day. That may sound like a lot but when we take a closer look at what a serving is, numbers can really add up quickly. In many cases, what we consider to be a serving may actually turn out to be two or three servings. Knowing this may help us realize that it is easier than we think to eat the amount of vegetables and fruit recommended by health experts.

We are fortunate to have access to a colourful and nutritious bounty of vegetables and fruit from a variety of cultures. This is made possible by the year-round growing, packing, and shipping of a wide range of produce, as well as living in a country that includes people from many cultural backgrounds.

Trying a greater variety of vegetables and fruit can act as a powerful and positive role model for children and grandchildren. With thousands of vegetables and fruit that have so many different colours, textures, and flavours from which to choose, we should all be able to find ways to enjoy eating a greater number and variety of them.

BENEFITS OF EATING 5-10 SERVINGS EVERY DAY

A diet rich in vegetables and fruit offers many health benefits:

- Reduces the risk for heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer
- Helps reach and keep a healthy weight
- Contains dietary fibre that helps prevent constipation
- Helps maintain healthy fetal development during pregnancy
- Supports the healthy growth and development in children
- Promotes healthy skin, teeth and gums, and other connective tissues

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE...

T F

1. One serving of salad greens is about equal in size to your fist.
2. Most Windsor-Essex residents older than 12 years consume vegetables and fruit less than five times per day.
3. Eating adequate amounts of vegetables and fruit help you reach and keep a healthy weight.
4. Eating more vegetables and fruit is easier if your fridge, freezer and cupboards are well-stocked with them.
5. “Phytochemical” is another word for a chemical found in milk.
6. Buying frozen vegetables is an easy way to eat more vegetables.
7. One of the largest perceived barriers to eating more vegetables and fruit is lack of time to prepare them.
8. It’s always healthier to obtain phytochemicals from supplements instead of from food.
9. A realistic goal for most people who are trying to eat more vegetables and fruit is to eat at least 10 servings a day.
10. Having more choices of vegetables and fruit at fast food restaurants is not a good idea.

see answers on back panel





WHY SHOULD WE EAT MORE VEGETABLES AND FRUIT?

There is a large body of evidence showing that eating adequate amounts of vegetables and fruit on a daily basis plays a significant role in promoting health and preventing several chronic diseases throughout our lives (World Health Organization, 2003). These include: heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer. Eating adequate amounts of vegetables and fruit is also key in helping reach and keep a healthy weight because they are naturally low in calories and help give a feeling of fullness. This is an important benefit, given the growing and alarming problem of obesity in Canada. Further, vegetables and fruit contain a wide variety of nutrients as well as other beneficial substances called “phytochemicals” or plant chemicals that boost the ability to keep our bodies healthy. The bad news is that almost two-thirds of Windsor-Essex residents, 12 years of age and older, eat vegetables and fruit less than five times a day.



In addition to benefiting from eating more vegetables and fruit, by eating a greater variety of them, we can increase our chances of getting more of the thousands of health-promoting phytochemicals that are found in plant-based foods. Mother nature continues to serve us well because food, not supplements, offers the best source of nutrition.

When it comes to eating a greater number and variety of vegetables, another important opportunity presents itself. We can learn more about cultures and ethnic backgrounds that are different from our own by trying new kinds of vegetables and fruits. More of these foods are now available to buy in our culturally-diverse Canadian communities.

Remember, increasing your intake by even one serving of vegetables and fruit, no matter what it is, is a step in the right direction.



HOW CAN YOU FIT MORE VEGETABLES AND FRUIT INTO YOUR DAY?

GET STARTED

A good way to start thinking about how to fit more vegetables and fruit into your day is to make a plan:

1. Look at each meal time, including snacks, and identify options that are “do-able” for you.
2. Consider where you will be during these times: at home, at work, on the go, or somewhere else.
3. Set a realistic goal for the number of servings to aim for each day, and keep track of how many you eat for at least one week (see back page). Start by trying to increase your intake by one extra serving each day, for 1-2 weeks.
4. Try to increase your intake by one serving each week until you are within the recommended 5-10 servings per day.

TAKE STEPS

Here are some examples of ways to add more vegetables and fruit to your day. If you are preparing and eating at home, deciding what to eat is easier and quicker if your fridge, freezer, and cupboards are stocked with nutritious choices. We tend to eat what is close at hand, especially when we are hungry. As a good food safety practice, you should always wash fresh vegetables and fruit well under running water.

Breakfast

Most of us don't have much time for breakfast, except on days off work.

- Start each day with a glass of 100% real fruit juice.
- Top your cereal with sliced banana or peaches, berries, or raisins.

- Add cut-up fruit to low-fat yogurt
- Spread peanut butter on a slice of whole wheat toast. Microwave half a banana for 30 seconds, mash with a fork, and spread on top.
- Add frozen or fresh sweet peppers, broccoli or spinach to egg dishes.
- On your way out the door, grab a piece of fresh fruit.
- Make a large fruit salad when you have the time. Use fresh and/or canned fruit that will last a few days to enjoy for any meal or snack.

Lunch

During the work week, this meal is often eaten away from home.

- When making dinner the night before, make extra veggies to take to work the next day.
- Buy vegetables that don't require a lot of preparation, like cut-up broccoli or cauliflower, baby carrots, and cherry tomatoes. Keep a bottle of low-fat salad dressing in your workplace fridge to have with these veggies.
- Buy pre-washed lettuce and salads. Choose darker greens like spinach and mixed greens more often.

What's a Serving Size?

One serving of vegetables or fruit is...	This looks like...
a medium-size piece of vegetable or fruit	a tennis ball
125 mL (1/2 c) of chopped vegetables or fruit	a computer mouse
250 mL (1 c) of salad greens	a fist
50 mL (1/4 c) dried fruit	a golf ball
125 mL (1/2 c) 100% real fruit or vegetable juice*	a small juice glass

*Fruit drinks, cocktails or punches do not count as real fruit juice because they contain only a small amount of real fruit or vegetable juice along with other liquids. Check the label for 100% juice.

WHAT ARE SOME BARRIERS TO EATING MORE VEGETABLES AND FRUIT?

One of the largest barriers identified is lack of time for planning, shopping, preparing, and eating. This leads to more people skipping meals, grabbing a quick bite or popping something in the microwave at the end of the work day. As a result, not much thought is given to eating adequate amounts of vegetables and fruit.

Another barrier is related to bad memories during childhood of vegetables and fruit being ‘forced’ on them. As a result, many adults have not developed a taste for eating a wide variety of vegetables and fruits. Finally, people of all incomes and education believe that eating more vegetables and fruit costs too much even though there are many ways to save money when buying these nutrient-dense foods.

The key features that help to break down these common barriers is to have a positive attitude, to be willing to try new foods, and to learn to prepare them in ways that are easy, taste good, and are quick.



- Include your favourite salsa that goes with almost any lunch meal.
- If lunching out, include veggies on your sandwich meal; add a side salad; choose a veggie pizza; include a serving of 100% real juice; or bring along a piece of fresh fruit to eat after the meal.

Dinner

Many of the suggestions for lunch could be used for dinner. In addition:

- Keep 2-3 kinds of frozen vegetables on hand for quick preparation. Use in prepared pasta sauces, canned soups, casseroles, or along side your meal by quickly microwaving or steaming them.
- Buy cut-up, frozen fruit for quick desserts, like berries, mango, and grapes. Top with low-fat yogurt or sour cream, if desired.
- Add cut-up pineapple chunks and bok choy to a stir-fry dish.
- Add cut-up fruit to salads, like papaya, kiwi fruit, strawberries, and cantaloupe.
- Ask your children to choose one new vegetable or fruit for the family to try each week.
- Grill strips of zucchini or sweet pepper, sliced eggplant, and pineapple slices.
- For dessert, dip fresh or canned fruit chunks into low-fat chocolate pudding.



Snacks

- Have at least one vegetable or fruit as a snack every day.
- Make vegetable and fruit visible in your home and at work. Keep them washed and cut-up for easy choosing.
- Keep some dried fruit at your workstation, like cranberries, apricots, raisins, and apples. Or, mix with pretzels, nuts, and whole-grain cereal for a nutritious trail mix.
- Serve raw vegetables with nutritious dips like hummus or bean dip.
- Make frozen fruit kabobs with your kids using pineapple chunks, bananas, grapes, and berries.

Whether you choose more fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit, or even if you prefer eating organically-grown versions, in almost all cases, there is no significant difference in the nutritional content of that particular vegetable or fruit.

The bottom line is to eat:

more of them...

more often...

with more variety!

GO FOR IT!

RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

5 to 10 a Day for Better Health

www.5to10aday.com/eng/index.htm

5 to 9 a Day for Better Health for Women and Men

http://5aday.nci.nih.gov/homepage/index_content.html

5aDay Program

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5ADay/index.htm

Tips to add flavour, not fat, to vegetables

www.toronto.ca/health/vf/vf_ripe_vegies.htm#5

Food Safety Facts for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/foodfacts/fruvege.pdf

“Pick-Your-Own” Farms in Windsor-Essex County

www.harvestontario.com/windsor.html

Canadian Cancer Society

Enter search terms, “eat well, be active”
www.cancer.ca

Dole 5 a Day for Kids

www.dole5aday.com/Kids/K_Home.jsp

Heart and Stroke Foundation

ww2.heartandstroke.ca
click on “Healthy Living”

Master Gardeners of Ontario

www.gardenontario.org/mas/index.php
Windsor-Essex Hotline 519-776-6328

Contact the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit for resources and programs on topics such as eating well, being active and quitting smoking.

**www.
wechealthunit
.org**

TRACK YOUR VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

Track how many servings of vegetables and fruit you eat for one week. How close are you to 5 to TEN a day?

Post this chart in your kitchen, at your workstation or keep it in your wallet or purse.

	breakfast	snack	lunch	snack	dinner	snack	daily total
MONDAY							
TUESDAY							
WEDNESDAY							
THURSDAY							
FRIDAY							
SATURDAY							
SUNDAY							

CLIP AND KEEP THIS INFORMATION!

MAKE IT HAPPEN

... AT YOUR WORKPLACE!

Here are some suggestions to encourage and support eating more vegetables and fruit in your workplace:

- When packing for your at-work meals and snacks, include vegetables and fruit that are easy choices. Examples are: pre-cut, washed vegetables (baby carrots, sweet pepper strips, broccoli, cauliflower, cherry tomatoes); frozen vegetables if a microwave is available; dried fruit (apricots, raisins, cranberries); and fresh or canned fruit (bananas, canned pineapple chunks, grapes).
- Organize an event through your wellness committee in which a variety of lesser-known fruit can be sampled. Ask for volunteers from several cultural backgrounds to demonstrate how to prepare them.
- Promote a “potluck” fruit basket in various work areas or departments. Suggest that employees take turns refilling the basket on a regular basis with washed, fresh fruit.
- Organize a presentation with a local certified Master Gardener to learn how to grow your own vegetables and fruit.
- Request that 100% real fruit and/or vegetable juices be available at reasonable prices in the vending machines.
- Consider converting any available green space at your workplace into a vegetable garden.
- Explore the possibility of having a truck that contains fresh produce visit your workplace on a weekly basis to offer employees an easy way of buying more fresh vegetables and fruit.

*“Time flies like an arrow.
Fruit flies like a banana!”*

Lisa Grossman



Key References

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Statistics Canada. (2003). Dietary practices in 2003. Retrieved April 28, 2005 from <http://www.statcan.ca/start.html>

American Dietetic Association (2001). Functional foods position paper. Retrieved on March 23, 2005 from <http://www.eatright.org/Member/PolicyInitiatives/index>

Answers (from front page): 1-T • 2-F • 3-T • 4-T • 5-F • 6-T • 7-T • 8-F • 9-F • 10-F

For more information about the Working Toward Wellness Program, please contact the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 258-2146 x 3100.

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Windsor-Essex County Health Unit - 360 Fairview Avenue West, Suite 215, Essex, Ontario N8M 3G4

Phone: 519-258-2146 x 3100 www.wehealthunit.org

1005 Ouellette Avenue, Windsor, Ontario N9A 4J8 • 215 Talbot Street East, Leamington, Ontario N8H 3X5



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