



HOT TOPIC

5 TO TEN A DAY *at Work*

Having a hard time coming up with healthy meal ideas for work? Eating nutritiously at work doesn't have to be difficult – especially if you incorporate vegetables and fruit into your day.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends eating 5 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit each day. To help reach this goal, some of these servings should be consumed during the workday, either as healthy snacks or as part of a balanced meal.

The health benefits of eating adequate amounts of vegetables and fruit are well documented. These include reducing the risk for diseases such as heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer (World Health Organization, 2003). Consuming 5 to 10 servings a day can also help you reach and maintain a healthy body weight, as most vegetables and fruit are naturally low in calories and give you the feeling of being full.

Although 5 to 10 servings a day sounds like a lot, the good news is that one serving is probably smaller than you think. A serving is equal to one medium-sized vegetable or fruit; 125 mL (½ c) of fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables or fruit; 250 mL (1 c) of salad greens; 50 mL (¼ c) of dried fruit; or 125 mL (½ c) of 100% real juice. Eating just one more serving of vegetables and fruit during your workday is a step in the right direction, so get munching!

The Real Meal Deal

Preparing healthy meals to take to work doesn't have to be time consuming, but it does involve some planning. Consider trying the following tips:

- Explore the convenience of using leftovers. When preparing vegetables for your at-home meal, be sure to make extra to take to work the next day.
- Buy vegetables that don't require a lot of preparation, such as baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, or pre-cut broccoli and cauliflower.
- Buy lettuce and salad mixtures that are pre-washed. Choose darker green varieties such as spinach, romaine, or mixed greens. Include some other veggies or fruit and your salad is ready. These nutritious greens can also be readily added to a sandwich.

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True or False? Pears are high in fibre.

True.

Pears are not only a high source of fibre, but they are also a source of vitamin C and potassium. However, removing the peel will also remove a lot of the fibre. Instead, thoroughly wash pears under cold running water and serve with the peel intact.

Reference:
Cancer Care Ontario. (2002). *Take Five: 5-10 a day...your way!* Toronto: Cancer Care Ontario.

- Find ways to add vegetables and fruit to your typical mealtime fare, such as loading up sandwiches with tomatoes, strips of sweet pepper, and zucchini, or by adding raisins and bananas to peanut butter sandwiches. To keep sandwiches crunchy, add your toppings just before eating.
- Take along portable fresh, dried, or canned fruit for dessert.



MARINATED VEGETABLE SALAD

This salad is a great way to help reach your 5 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit. Serve on its own, or stuff into a whole-wheat pita for a hearty sandwich. Consider garnishing with olives, chickpeas, or capers for some added pizzazz.

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|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 head broccoli, chopped | 1 red pepper, sliced |
| 1 head cauliflower, chopped | 1 cucumber, sliced |
| 20 mushrooms, quartered | 500 mL (16 oz) |
| 1 Spanish onion, diced | fat-free Italian salad dressing |
| 1 green pepper, sliced | |

Mix all vegetables, add salad dressing, and marinate for at least 4 hours.

Makes 8 servings

PER SERVING

Calories 83

Fat 1 g

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Veggies and Fruit as Snacks

Nutritious snacks can add valuable nutrients to your daily intake. Vegetables and fruit are portable, tasty, and make great snacks during your workday. They can also help to regulate blood sugar levels and provide an extra energy boost. Try the following snack suggestions to help reach your 5 to 10 a day:

- Dried fruit such as cranberries, apricots, raisins, and apples. These can be easily stored in your desk or locker.
- Canned fruit. Look for fruit canned in juice rather than syrup.
- 100% real vegetable or fruit juice boxes.
- If refrigeration is available, bring raw vegetables such as carrots, green pepper strips, cherry tomatoes, cauliflower, and cucumbers. Enjoy alone or with a lower-fat salad dressing.

Fast Food and Eating Out

It's common for many employees to go out for meals or grab a quick bite from the cafeteria during the workday. Look for the following vegetable and fruit choices when placing your order:

- Tossed salads. Watch out for salad dressings as they can significantly bump up the calories. Instead, choose a low-fat dressing on the side so you can control how much you pour on.
- Grilled veggie sandwiches or sandwiches made with added vegetables.
- Vegetable pizza.
- 100% real fruit juice.
- Vegetable soups and side dishes.
- Fruit platters or fruit and yogurt parfaits.

References:

Five to ten a day can be easy, even during the workday! Retrieved June 24, 2005, from http://www.toronto.ca/health/vf/vf_5to10_easy.htm.

Eating vegetables and fruits as snacks. Retrieved June 24, 2005, from http://www.toronto.ca/health/vf/vf_fruit_as_snacks.htm.

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