



# Adding Fruits and Vegetables to Meals

Are you eating the recommended 2-2/2 cups of fruits and vegetables every day? If not, you are not alone. Many Adult Americans are not meeting the recommended amounts set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Here are some suggestions to help increase your daily intake of fruits and vegetables:

## Shopping and Planning:

### Go Meatless One Day a Week:

The campaign “Meatless Mondays” is gaining popularity with many people. The idea is go meat free one day per week and increase fruit and vegetables. Reducing meat may help lower risk of diseases such as heart disease and certain cancers. It can also reduce your food budget as meat can be expensive. Choose a convenient day to cut meat out of your diet. It doesn't necessarily need to be a Monday. For great recipe ideas, visit: <http://www.meatlessmonday.com/>

### Visit your local farmer's market:

Take advantage of visit your local farmer's market during the summer and fall months. This is a great way to learn about produce you've never tried before, and support your local community. Don't know what to do with it? Ask the farmer or vendor for cooking suggestions and recommendations. To learn more about markets near you, visit:

<http://www.localfarmmarkets.org/>

### Feature a fruit/vegetable of the week:

Experiment with a seasonal fruit or vegetable each week. If you chose a food in season, you'll get the best flavor of that food and you're more likely to enjoy it. Check your grocery store adds to find foods on sale. Specials often mean that a food is in season and abundant. Once you have an idea of what you'd like to try, look through food magazines, online recipes or cookbooks for recipes.

## In the Kitchen:

### Make it convenient:

Pre-wash and cut fruits and vegetables for a quick snack or to use when preparing dinner. You're more likely to snack on them if they are handy. Rely on chopped vegetables and fruit at the grocery store with time is limited. Frozen and canned produce is a good back up if you purchase low sodium and low added sugar options.

### Add finely chopped, shredded, or pureed

**vegetables to dishes:** These can be easily added to meals when cut into small pieces. Try sautéing in olive oil first to reduce moisture and add flavor. Great vegetables to use include zucchini, sweet potatoes, summer squash, carrots, onions, and red peppers.

Meals to include vegetables:

- Soup
- Pasta sauce
- Lasagna
- Chili
- Waffle and pancake batter
- Meatloaf

Time saver: Put extra vegetables in a freezer safe bag and store until you're ready to use again for the next meal.

### Add to a smoothie:

This is a great way to add a variety of fruits and vegetables into your day. Greens such as spinach, kale, parsley, and cucumbers work well in smoothies. If the idea of a green drink isn't appealing, start with fruits such as berries, mango, and banana, then add vegetables such as carrots and avocado.

### Add to Baked Goods:

Think outside the banana bread box and add vegetables to other baked goods. Try adding zucchini and carrot to bran muffins, or add pumpkin or butternut squash to pancake and waffle mix. Or consider adding avocados to pudding. Chocolate is a great way to compliment the flavors of vegetables. Beets can be added to chocolate cake, or pureed spinach can be added to brownie mix.



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## Think outside the box:

### Instead of Bread/Buns:

- lettuce leaves
- Portobello Mushroom Caps
- Sweet potato slices (cooked in oven or in the toaster)
- Grilled Eggplant slices
- Whole tomato cut in half

### Pasta Substitutes:

These can be made with a fruit and vegetable spiralizer kitchen tool. Prices range \$10-\$130  
Great recipes at [www.inspiralized.com](http://www.inspiralized.com)

- Zucchini noodles "Zoodles"
  - Sweet Potato Noodles
  - parsnip noodles
  - Beets
  - rutabaga
- Other options:
- Spaghetti Squash
  - sliced eggplant in place of lasagna noodles

### Bread Alternatives:

- lettuce wraps
- Cauliflower Pizza Crust
- Cauliflower tortillas
- Sliced Sweet potato

### Rice alternatives:

- Cauliflower Rice
- Parsnip rice
- Sweet Potato Rice
- Turnip Rice

### Chip and cracker Alternatives:

- Kale Chips
- Carrot Chips
- Zucchini Chips
- Plantain or banana chips
- Roasted chickpeas
- Sliced cucumbers

### Kale Chips: Ingredients

- 1 bunch kale, washed and completely dried
- Salt to taste
- 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil

**Cooking Time: 20 minutes**

### Directions

Wash whole kale leaves, shake out or dry in a salad spinner, then place on a rack to dry thoroughly (this can take an hour or several hours). You can also dry the leaves thoroughly with towels.

Preheat oven to 275 F. Once kale leaves are completely dried, tear leaves off the fibrous central stem into potato-chip-sized pieces and place onto two baking sheets in a single layer with some space around each leaf. (Spacing is very important — it allows air to circulate and the chips to crisp.)

Sprinkle on salt and drizzle with a small amount of olive oil, about 1 tablespoon per baking sheet. Toss with tongs to evenly distribute salt and oil.

Place prepared kale leaves into the preheated oven, and bake for 20 minutes, turning over leaves halfway through baking.

Remove from oven. Allow to sit for a minute, then serve.

### Nutrition Information (per serving)

- 190 calories
- 22 g carbohydrates
- 10 g fat
- 8 g protein
- 267 mg sodium