

FAMILY

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Basic steps to add fruits, vegetables to diet



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Unfortunately, most people are not eating enough fruits and vegetables. As part of September Fruits and Veggies – More Matters Month, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offers some easy ways to incorporate more fruits and vegetables in your daily diet.

According to Amy Valdez, Health Specialist with AgriLife Extension, fruits and vegetables provide beautiful colors that can be appealing to the eye, and they also help to combat against certain diseases such as cancer. For example, both fruits and vegetables have been known to reduce risk for heart disease, heart attacks, strokes, obesity,

Fruits and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet, providing the nutrients and vitamins we need to perform daily activities.

and type 2 diabetes, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's health and nutrition program, ChooseMyPlate.

Incorporating fruits and vegetables into your diet also provides you with many nutrients that are often under consumed, such as potassium, dietary fiber, Vitamin C, Vitamin A and folate.

To make it easier to add a variety of fruits and veggies into your diet, Valdez recommends following these six basic steps:

- **Half your plate** — each time you eat a meal or have a snack, fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.

- **Add more** — add extra fruits and vegetables into a recipe even if it already contains them.

- **Substitute** — substitute fruits and vegetables in any meal as a healthier alternative to a food that has less nutritional value.

- **Stay stocked** — stay stocked on canned fruits and vegetables without added sugars for a quick and easy meal prep.

- **Steam and flavor** — add healthy sides to your meals by

steaming vegetables and topping them with low-fat dressings, and herbs and spices.

- **Grab and go** — put fruit and vegetables in places where you can easily grab them on the way out, such as in a bowl or sliced in the fridge.

To avoid getting tired of eating the same fruits and vegetables, trade out an ordinary side salad with something that offers a variety of both fruits and vegetables. For example, Dinner Tonight's Watermelon Cucumber Balsamic Salad or Black Bean Salsa are sides that can enhance any meal with the perfect amount of fruit and vegetables that you need.

To learn more about the recipes, visit <https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu>

When it comes to eating fruits and vegetables, keep in mind that more is better. Most people need a minimum of 2 cups of fruit and 2.5 cups of vegetables each day, however, you can set goals for yourself based on your recommended caloric intake which will help you to reach your daily needs.