

F NEW-LIFESTYLES STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOUSM FRUIT FACTS

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Why should fruits be a key part of everyone's daily diet?

Providing the variety we crave, fruits keep meals interesting. Some fruits burst with flavor in our mouths, add zip to otherwise bland recipes, and tempt with a diversity of textures.

Naturally sweet, fruits make a perfect afternoon treat or after-dinner dessert.

Besides coloring our markets and our meals with a variety of tastes, textures and shapes, fruits provide essential vitamins and minerals, dietary fiber, water and other substances that are important for good health. They are good sources of vitamin A, vitamin C, folate and potassium. Eating the recommended 5 servings a day may reduce the risk of cancer and protect from other chronic diseases like heart disease and stroke. Additionally, most fruits are naturally low in fat and calories and none has cholesterol. They look good, taste good, and are good for you.

1. Are avocados bad for you?

Many people steer away from avocados after learning that avocados are high in fat. Avocados are loaded with nutrients such as

dietary fiber, vitamin B6, vitamin C, vitamin E, potassium, magnesium and folate.

They're also cholesterol and sodium free. Avocados contain 60% more potassium per ounce than bananas. This fruit is an excellent source of monounsaturated fat. So, go ahead and make that homemade guacamole!

2. Is a tomato a fruit or a vegetable?

Often thought of and used as a vegetable, botanically-speaking, tomatoes are actually a fruit. This is because by definition a fruit is the edible part of the plant that contains the seeds. A vegetable, on the other hand, is the edible stems, leaves, and roots of the plant. No matter what you call it – fruit or vegetable, it's still delicious when grown in the backyard and eaten out of the garden!

3. If it is recommended that I eat 3 to 4 servings of fruit daily, how big is one serving?

One serving size of fruit is defined as:

- 3/4 cup (6 oz.) 100 percent juice
- One medium fruit (e.g., apple, orange, banana, pear)
- 1/2 cup cut-up fruit
- 1/4 cup dried fruit
- 12 fresh cherries
- 3/4 cup blueberries
- 1/2 large grapefruit
- 1 cup of raspberries
- 17 small grapes



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Here are some tips for picking and preparing the freshest fruits.

Apple

One of everyone's favorite fruits, apples have secured their place in American cuisine and culture. Consuming about 120 apples apiece each year, Americans clearly follow the old adage that "an apple a day keeps the doctor away." There are 2500 known apple varieties grown in the U.S. with flavors ranging from sweet and juicy to tart and crisp and with names like Golden & Red Delicious, Gala, Fuji, McIntosh, Jonathan and Granny Smith to name a few varieties.

Choose firm apples that are free of soft spots. Keep apples in a plastic bag in the refrigerator after purchasing to prevent further ripening for up to six weeks. Wash apples with soap and rinse with water before eating. After they are cut, apples will quickly turn brown from the effects of oxidation. To prevent browning, sprinkle apple slices with a solution of one part citrus juice to three parts water.

Watermelon

A member of the squash and cucumber family, watermelon is surprisingly a vegetable even though we enjoy it as a "fruit." Watermelon consists of 92% water and 8% sugar which makes it such a refreshing summer treat! Choose a firm, symmetrical watermelon free of soft spots, cracks and bruises. Ripe watermelon will have a healthy sheen, a dull rind, dried stem, and a buttery yellow underside where it touched the ground. It should smell like melon. Ripe watermelon should feel heavy for its size and have a hollow sound if you thump it. Avoid immature white or very pale green colored watermelon.



Ever come upon a fruit or vegetable in the grocery store that you've never seen before? Satisfy your natural curiosity and ask someone working in the produce department what the fruit or vegetable is and how to prepare it. Another good way to safely branch out and try something new is to ask another store patron how they plan to cook that strange vegetable or fruit they just selected. You just might discover a new family favorite!

Strawberries

There's nothing like the taste of plump, fresh strawberries bursting with flavor in your mouth. From the moment you pick one up, the smell overwhelms your nose with sweetness. It's best to choose strawberries that are plump, firm and well-colored. Strawberries are at their best when their season starts in early April.

Always refrigerate strawberries if you are not eating them the same day you buy them. Do not remove the caps or wash the berries until you are ready to use them. When caps are removed before use, the berries lose some of their moisture. Washing early tends to bruise them and the berries lose their freshness.

Cantaloupe

Also known as muskmelon, cantaloupes are considered "in-season" from May to September. When selecting a cantaloupe, choose one with a yellowish rind and a pleasant aroma. The stem area should be clean as this indicates that the fruit was ripe when picked. If the cantaloupe is extra-juicy, you will hear the seeds rattle inside when you shake it.

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