

The Importance of Fruits & Vegetables

WHY CHILDREN SHOULD BE EATING FRUITS & VEGETABLES DAILY

Fruits and vegetables contain essential **vitamins, minerals,** and **fiber** necessary for the **growth and development of children and teens.** Children should eat a variety of fruits and vegetables to ensure that they are meeting the daily requirements for vitamins and minerals. Vitamins and minerals are important in the diet because they are essential for many processes in the body. Vitamins and minerals boost our immune system, support normal growth and development, and help cells and organs do their jobs. Fiber is necessary as well to regulate the digestive tract.



According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 60% of children do not eat enough fruit and 93% of children do not eat enough vegetables. Although many children do not meet the requirements for fruit and vegetable intake, many children exceed recommendations for solid fats and added sugars. Poor eating patterns in childhood can lead to many health issues in adulthood.



Children learn from eating behaviors from those around them. Therefore, parents, siblings, caregivers, and peers influence the development of eating behaviors and food preferences. Eating behaviors learned during childhood also carry into adolescence and adulthood. Parents play an important role in children's food preferences by serving as role models, adopting certain eating behaviors, and by purchasing and providing food for children.

Ways to encourage your child to eat more fruits and vegetables:

- Involve your child in food preparation and planning
- Show your child that you enjoy eating fruits & vegetables
- Offer a variety of fruits & vegetables for them to try
- Ask them what fruit or vegetable they chose for lunch at school
- Never assume a child dislikes a fruit or vegetable because they tried it once before

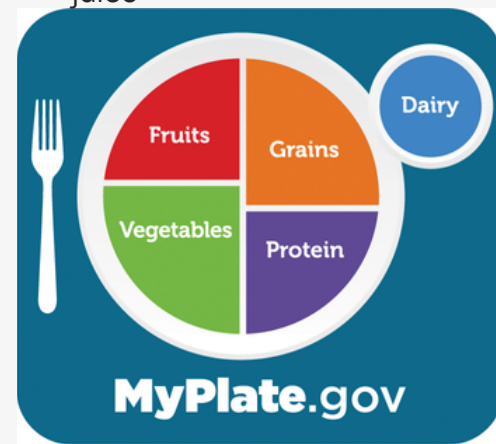
Children should have at least 4-5 servings of both fruits and vegetables daily.

Servings sizes of fruits:

- one medium sized fruit
- 1/2 cup of frozen, fresh, or canned fruit
- 1/4 cup of dried fruit
- 1/2 cup of 100% fruit juice

Servings sizes of vegetables:

- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables
- 1/2 cup of frozen, fresh, or canned vegetables
- 1/2 cup of 100% vegetable juice



MyPlate.gov is a resource based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. MyPlate is a simple tool to help Americans plan meals by incorporating the 5 food groups. MyPlate recommendations for fruits and vegetables include filling **half** of your plate with **fruits and vegetables.** Parents or caregivers can try using MyPlate when preparing meals for children.

Visit www.myplate.gov for more information