

5 A Day Morphs into Fruits & Veggies—More Matters™

First there was the *5 A Day* campaign to remind us to eat enough fruits and vegetables to be healthy. Then there was *5 to 9 A Day* that encouraged us to eat *more* fruits and vegetables, and now there is “Fruits & Veggies - - More Matters™”. New data from the CDC and Oregon’s Department of Human Services shows that most of us are not eating enough fruits and vegetables per day. Nearly three-quarters of all Oregonians eat fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. What does this truly mean for you and your family?

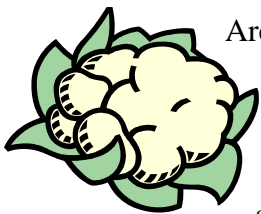


The bottom line is fruits and vegetables are loaded with nutrients that you can not get from a pill or other form. Frozen, fresh or canned fruits and vegetables provide fiber, vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals (plant chemicals) and in some instances heart healthy fats that are important for good health. Vitamin supplements can not supply all the nutrients found in vegetables and fruits – sorry, there are no miracle vitamin pills.

Many people find incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables into their diets difficult. Most of us are creatures of habit and are functioning on autopilot by the time dinnertime rolls around; hence we rely on tried and true foods like potatoes and iceberg lettuce to balance our diets and that results in not the best of diets. At the other end, morning, breakfast may be little more than a slurp of coffee and piece of toast, a rich coffee drink heavy on sugar and fats, or nothing at all. The challenge becomes one of finding ways to incorporate fruits and vegetables into our diets without creating a lot of extra work for ourselves and families.

Starting with breakfast add one serving of fruit by sprinkling frozen blueberries over your cereal. slicing a banana onto peanut butter toast or eating an apple in the car on the way to work. There are other ways to add fruits to the morning meal such as raisins cooked with oatmeal or other hot cereals and fruit smoothies.

Take a stroll through the produce section of your favorite store. Resist the urge to grab a head of iceberg lettuce and a bag of spuds. Slow down; look at the variety of fruits and vegetables surrounding you. Aren’t they pretty? Have you ever noticed how curly kale looks like a bouquet? Not only it is pretty it really is edible and it tastes good too. Did you see the cauliflower? Now is the perfect time to enjoy locally grown cauliflower as most of it on the market was grown in Oregon or Washington.



Are you shy about purchasing cauliflower? Not sure how to cook it? My eighty year old mother has been introducing kids to the nutty sweetness of cauliflower for decades. Her secret is simple. Wash and cut into florets, gently steam until tender and then, grate cheddar cheese over the top. The hot cauliflower melts the cheese and you get an instantly delicious cheese sauce. The nutty sweetness of the cauliflower melds with the slight tanginess of the cheese into a perfectly divine taste sensation.



The internet is a great source of recipes if you like to surf it. Your local library will have cookbooks you can read or check out if you want to explore more vegetable and fruit recipes. Invite your friends and their cookbooks over for tea or coffee and spend some time exploring recipes and meal plans together. You might even want to have a salad potluck dinner to introduce your families to new vegetables and fruits.

Whatever course of action you decide to take, even the smallest steps toward consuming more vegetables and fruits results in better nutrition for you and your family.

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