



5-A-DAY – How to get enough fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables can help you achieve a healthier lifestyle and can add flavour, variety and texture to a meal.

- Average fruit and vegetable consumption in England is around 3 portions a day, with even less being consumed by children and those on low incomes.
- The current recommendation is that people eat at least 5 portions a day, to reduce the risks of cancer, coronary heart disease.
- The main barriers to eating more fruit and vegetables concern access and availability of good quality, affordable fruit and vegetables locally, plus attitudes, motivation and skills regarding buying, preparing and eating of fruit and veg and awareness of the 5-a-day message.

Reducing the risk of chronic diseases with fruit and vegetables

- It is estimated that eating at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day can reduce the risk of death from chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and cancer by up to 20%.
- Diet may contribute to the development of a third of all cancers. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is thought to be the second most important strategy for **preventing cancer**, ahead of giving up smoking.
- Higher consumption of fruit and vegetables can also **reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke**. It may also help to lower high blood pressure.
- In addition, the increased intake of fibre from eating fruit and vegetables can aid digestion. As they are naturally low in fat and calories, they can aid weight loss when eaten instead of high sugar, high fat snacks and side dishes.
- The reason why fruit and vegetables are so beneficial is their high content of vitamins and minerals, as well as plant chemicals known as phytochemicals. These may have antioxidant properties, destroying free radicals, which are known to play a role in the development of cancer.
- Dietary supplements do not convey the same health benefits as whole foods, indicating that the *interactions* of phytochemicals may be important in their action.

What counts as a portion?

- *Fresh, frozen, chilled, canned, 100% juice/smoothies and dried fruit and vegetables all count towards 5-a-day.*
- Fruit and vegetables in ready meals, pasta sauces, soups and puddings can all contribute to 5-a-day. However, all these foods may also be high in sugar, fat or salt, so eat them in moderation and always check the label.

One portion of fruit, equivalent to 80g, might be:

- o Half a large grapefruit
- o A slice of melon
- o A medium apple, pear or banana
- o A handful of grapes
- o 2 plums or satsumas
- o A tablespoon of raisins
- o 3 dried apricots
- o 1 medium glass of 100% fruit juice

One portion of vegetables is also equivalent to 80g and could be:

- o 3 heaped tablespoons of sweetcorn, carrots or peas
- o 2 broccoli florets
- o A handful of vegetable sticks
- o 7 cherry tomatoes
- o A cereal bowl of salad
- o Half a large courgette



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- Exceptions
 - A glass of 100% (fruit or vegetable juice or smoothie) counts as a portion but can only count as one, regardless of how much is drunk. This is because juice is low in fibre and the juicing process releases the natural fruit sugars from the cells. Fruit juices can therefore be bad for your teeth, especially if you drink a lot of it in between meals.
 - Beans and other pulses such as kidney beans, chick peas and lentils also can only count once a day, regardless of how much are eaten. While they contain fibre, they do not have the same mixture of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients as fruit and vegetables.
 - Potatoes, cassava and yam do not count towards your 5-a-day as these are classed as starchy carbohydrates.
- Your 5 portions a day should be made up of different types of fruit and vegetables to get the maximum benefits. All fruit and vegetables contain different combinations of fibre, vitamins and minerals and so eating a variety of types will ensure you get the most benefit.

Novel Ways to 5-a-day

- Add vegetables to a stew, stir fry or curry to boost the vitamin and mineral content. Use roasted vegetables as an added topping to your favourite pizza.
- Add interest to vegetables by adding herbs and spices.
- Thread fruit or vegetable chunks onto skewers and barbeque or grill for an interesting twist on a kebab.
- Have a glass of fruit juice with your breakfast and add dried or fresh fruit to muesli, cereal or porridge.
- Snack on fruit and chopped vegetable sticks (carrots, peppers, celery and cucumber) rather than a packet of crisps or chocolate bar. This will give you vitamins and minerals and will also help you stay a healthy weight.
- Eat a side salad with lunch or add lettuce, tomato, cucumber or grated carrot to a sandwich.
- Add 2 portions of vegetables to your meal at dinner time and try unusual or seasonal varieties to add interest and flavour.

On a budget?

- For those on a budget, frozen and tinned fruit and vegetables are a cheaper, but still a nutritious alternative to fresh. Try to buy them canned in fruit juice or water, rather than syrup or brine to minimise the sugar or salt content.

Kids don't like vegetables?

- Hide vegetables finely chopped in a home-made pasta sauce, blended into soups or mashed in with potato.
- Make up bags of mixed dried and fresh chopped fruit or bite size sticks of vegetables and use in lunch boxes or on picnics. Children like finger food, especially if you use brightly coloured vegetables and serve with a tasty dip.

The 5-a-day logo

- The Government have developed a logo to indicate the number of portions of fruit and vegetables contained within a product. It can be used on packaging, with certain restrictions. The product must not contain added sugar, salt or fat, so fruit tinned in juice or vegetables canned in brine cannot carry the logo. However, they can still form part of a balanced diet, if eaten in moderation.
- 3663 have developed a 5-a-day logo to show those products that contribute to your daily fruit and vegetable intake. Like the Government logo, we only signpost those products that do not contain added sugar, salt or fat.
- For more information on 5-a-day and the Government logo, see:
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/FiveADay/fs/en>

Tips for Caterers

- Try using the above advice for incorporating more fruit and vegetables into meals.
- You could put a 5-a-day logo on the menu next to children's (and adults') foods to indicate how many portions of fruit and vegetables are contained within the meal.
- Try adding fresh fruit smoothies to the menu – these make an interesting drink and if made to order, are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre.
- Encourage customers to order a side salad or vegetable selection with their meals.