

## 10 Sneaky Ways to Get More Fruits and Veggies in Your Diet



Are you eating your fruits and veggies? In a recent informal poll by HealthyWomen, 42 percent of respondents answered that question with a resounding no, reporting only consuming 0-2 servings a day. A close second (40 percent) say they consume 3-5 servings, which is still lower than the American Heart Association's suggested amount, which calls for eight servings. The Dietary Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommend anywhere from 5 to 13 servings of fruits and vegetables per day depending on age, gender, physical activity and overall health.

We all know that fruits and veggies ward off chronic conditions while helping us to feel healthier and more energized. But even for the most health-conscious eaters, getting more of these nutrients can be a challenge. So, try these 10 tricks for adding more fruits and veggies to your daily diet.

**Snack smart:** Instead of snacking on chips or cookies, make sure to have healthier alternatives on hand. Some great options include baby carrots and hummus, celery and peanut butter, sugar snap peas or a piece of fruit. Remember that a ½ cup of most raw fruits or veggies equals one serving.

**Leave fruit in obvious sight:** Passing by the kitchen? You're more likely to grab a handful of grapes or cherries if they are sitting on the counter displayed in a nice bowl. Or perhaps, if they're in your view, you'll grab a banana or orange on the way out the door.

**Make soup:** Homemade soups can be super simple and a great way to increase your vegetable intake. Cook any amount of fresh or leftover vegetables (for example, carrots, onions, green beans, mushrooms, rutabagas, tomatoes and zucchini) until vegetables are tender and add them to a simple broth for an easy weekday meal. Throw in a can of beans and some leftover cooked brown rice or quinoa for a heartier soup.



**Plan ahead:** If you find yourself with a free hour on a Sunday morning, get out the chopper and prepare your veggies for the week. Sauté some olive oil with peppers, mushrooms, onions and zucchini so the mix is ready to add to any meal—omelets, salads, sandwiches, pasta and more.

**Never go fruit or veggie-less:** Make sure every meal or snack you eat is paired with a fruit or veggie. For instance, add salsa to your eggs, avocado to your turkey sandwich and fruit to your cereal or pair string cheese with a handful of grapes or celery with peanut butter, instead of crackers.

**Double up:** Two serving of veggies please! This is the one time that doubling up on your servings can actually be a good thing. The USDA recommends filling half your plate with fruits and veggies.

**Always include salad before or after dinner.** And this doesn't have to mean just boring lettuce and tomato—try spicing it up, maybe with sautéed mushrooms or by making a chopped salad with fruit and nuts.

**Freeze your fruit:** Looking for a sweet snack after dinner? Sometimes the perfect simple dessert consists of a handful of frozen grapes or strawberries (1/2 a cup equals one serving).

**Snack on a smoothie:** A blended smoothie can offer the perfect breakfast, lunch or snack. Start with your favorite fruits and some low-fat or almond milk and then throw in a handful of greens for an added nutritional boost (1 cup of greens equals one serving of veggies). If you're worried that you won't like the flavor of the spinach or romaine, add a banana or a small spoonful of peanut butter or both, and you won't taste the greens.

**Sneak it in:** Picky eaters won't even notice a layer of spinach in the lasagna or a cup of sautéed diced carrots in the tomato sauce. Making your own hummus? Blend in red peppers and avocado for added flavor and health benefits.

