




Vegetables and Fruit: Summary Sheet

Health Canada recommends that adults have 7 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruits per day (Canada Food Guide). **More than 60% of Albertans eat less than the minimum recommendation.**⁽¹⁾

Why Vegetables and Fruit Are Important To Your Health

Vegetables and fruits have protective substances in them, such as vitamins, minerals, fibre, and plant compounds called phytochemicals.⁽²⁻⁴⁾ These protective substances can:

- **Reduce the risk of strokes** - Vegetables and fruits can lower blood pressure and reduce other cardiovascular risk factors. A meta-analysis found that the risk of stroke goes down by as much as 32% for every two servings of vegetables and fruits eaten.⁽⁵⁾
- **Reduce blood cholesterol and protect against cardiovascular disease** - We know that 31% of ischemic heart disease is due to a low intake of vegetables and fruit.⁽⁶⁾
- **Reduce risk of certain cancers** - There is convincing evidence that eating fibre can reduce the risk of colorectal cancer. Vegetable and fruit intake could possibly lower the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, and stomach.⁽⁷⁾
- **Promote a healthy weight** - Vegetables and fruits are naturally low in calories and high in fiber. This means 2 things; 1) you will take in fewer calories and 2) you will feel fuller. It's easier to lose weight and stay at a healthy weight when you eat vegetables and fruits prepared with little or no added fat and eat less meat, grains, and dairy products.^(3,8)

One serving of vegetable and fruit is:			
Item	Amount	Food	Number of servings
	1 cup (250 mL)	Salad	1 serving
		Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables or fruit	2 servings
	¾ cup (175 mL)	Whole vegetable or fruit, medium size	1 serving
	½ cup (125 mL)	Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit	1 serving
Tips <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose whole vegetables and fruits instead of juice • Choose fresh, frozen and canned vegetables and fruits without added salt, sugar, and higher calorie sauces or syrups 			

What You Can Do as a Health Provider

- Encourage your patients to eat more vegetables and fruits by pointing out the health benefits of reducing their risk of heart disease, cancer, and stroke.
- Highlight why these foods are healthy and how much they should eat each day.
- Use the Healthy Living Prescription to help your patients set goals on how to add more vegetables and fruits into their diet.

References

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