Easy Ways to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables.

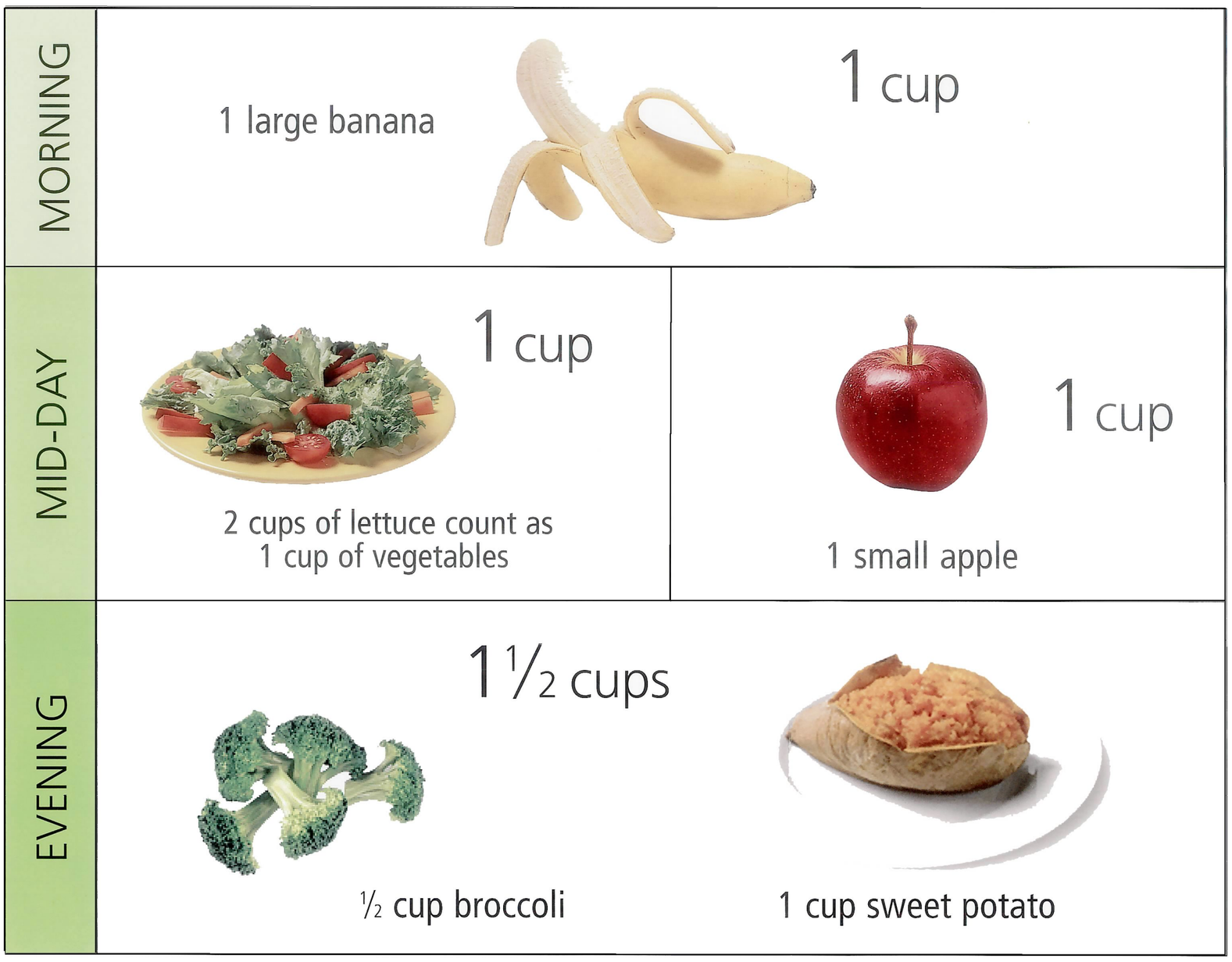
Eating your fruits and vegetables is a lot easier than you might think. Once cup-equivalent of most fruits and vegetables is the amount that would fit in a measuring cup if chopped, or about 2 handfuls. The exceptions are raw leafy greens (2 cups count as 1 cup) or dried fruit (1/2 cup counts as 1 cup).

The following examples count a 1 cup:

1 small apple
1 large banana
2 medium cantaloupe wedges
1 medium grapefruit
1 large orange
1 large peach
1 medium pear
2 large or 3 small plums
8 large strawberries
2 small watermelon wedge
2 small boxes of raisins or other dried fruit

3 spears of broccoli
1 cup of cooked greens or 2 cups raw
(spinach, collards, mustard greens, turnip greens)
2 medium carrots or 12 bay carrots
1 large sweet potato
1 large ear of corn
1 medium potato
2 large stalks of celery
1 large bell pepper
1 large tomato
½ can of beans

For example, a 35 year-old fairly active woman would need 4 ½ cups per day.
The chart below shows what 4 ½ cups might look like.



Fruits and vegetables are only one component of a healthy diet. In addition to fruits and vegetables, a healthy diet also includes whole grains, fat-free or low-fat milk products, lean meats, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts. It is also low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt, and added sugars.

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Why Eating Fruits and Vegetables is Important for Children

IT ALL BEGINS IN CHILDHOOD

African American youth have the highest rates of overweight and obesity among all children. Type 2 diabetes is also going up at alarming rates among African American children. Eating habits that affect a child's risk for these problems begin in childhood. Healthy eating in childhood, and into the adult years, can help lower their chances for diseases later in life. These diseases include obesity, overweight, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and cancer. Most African American kids eat less than half of the amount of fruits and vegetables recommended for good health.

GOOD HABITS LAST A LIFETIME

It's important for us to help kids develop good habits they can carry into their adults lives. Eating more fruits and vegetables when they are young will make it easier for them to eat more fruits and vegetables as adults.

NUTRIENTS TO GROW HEALTHY AND STRONG

Fruits and vegetables give children many of the nutrients they need to grow healthfully. Eating enough fruits and vegetables also helps kids develop strong muscles, bones, and teeth.

How Many Fruits and Vegetables Do You Need?

Everybody should eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables. But most adults need to eat more than Children. And men need even more than women. Over 75% of all African Americans aren't eating enough Fruits and vegetables to keep them healthy.

Women

	AGE	FRUITS	VEGETABLES
less active	19–30	2 cups	2½ cups
less active	31–50	1½ cups	2½ cups
less active	51+	1½ cups	2 cups
fairly active	19–50	2 cups	2½ cups
fairly active	51+	1½ cups	2½ cups
active	19–50	2 cups	3 cups
active	51+	2 cups	2½ cups

Men

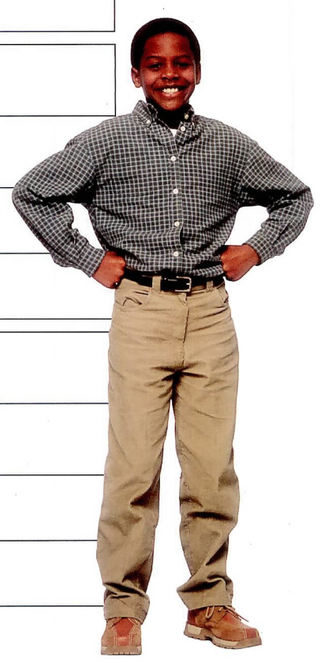
	AGE	FRUITS	VEGETABLES
less active	19–50	2 cups	3 cups
less active	51+	2 cups	2½ cups
fairly active	19–30	2 cups	3½ cups
fairly active	31+	2 cups	3 cups
active	19–30	2½ cups	4 cup
active	31–50	2½ cups	3½ cups
active	51+	2 cups	3 cups

Girls

	AGE	FRUITS	VEGETABLES
less active	2–3	1 cup	1 cup
less active	4–8	1 cup	1½ cups
less active	9–13	1½ cups	2 cups
less active	14–18	1½ cups	2½ cups
fairly active	2–3	1 cup	1 cup
fairly active	4–8	1½ cups	1½ cups
fairly active	9–13	1½ cups	2 cups
fairly active	14–18	2 cups	2½ cups
active	2–3	1 cup	1 cup
active	4–8	1½ cups	1½ cups
active	9–13	1½ cups	2½ cups
active	14–18	2 cups	3 cups

Boys

	AGE	FRUITS	VEGETABLES
less active	2–3	1 cup	1 cup
less active	4–8	1½ cups	1½ cups
less active	9–13	1½ cups	2½ cups
less active	14–18	2 cups	3 cups
fairly active	2–3	1 cup	1 cup
fairly active	4–8	1½ cups	1½ cups
fairly active	9–13	1½ cups	2½ cups
fairly active	14–18	2 cups	3 cups
active	2–3	1 cup	1 cup
active	4–8	1½ cups	2 cups
active	9–13	2 cups	2½ cups
active	14–18	2½ cups	3½ cups

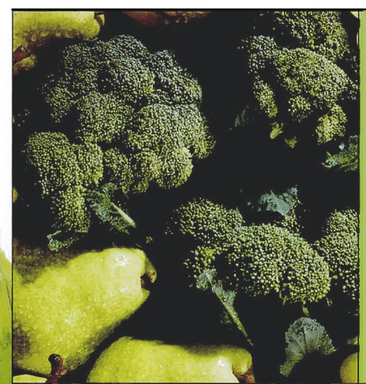


MOST AFRICAN AMERICANS NEED TO EAT MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES EVERY DAY

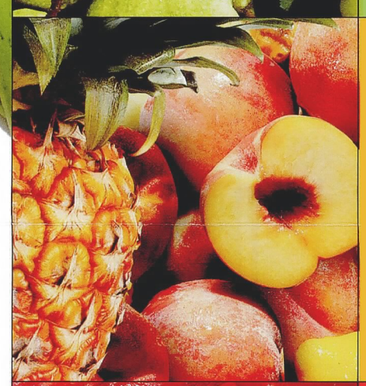
The Colors of Health

Fruits and vegetables come in a rainbow of colors. Each color is a sign of different important nutrients. You can benefit from eating fruits and vegetables of different colors regularly. These include red, dark green, yellow, blue, purple, white, and orange. Health authorities advise making a special effort to eat more dark green vegetables, dark orange vegetables, and beans in particular to get the nutrients most of us need more of.

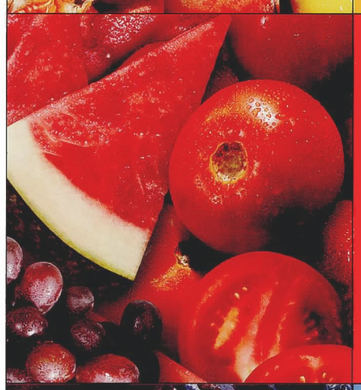
This char shows 5 basic color groups and gives some examples of fruits and vegetables from each.



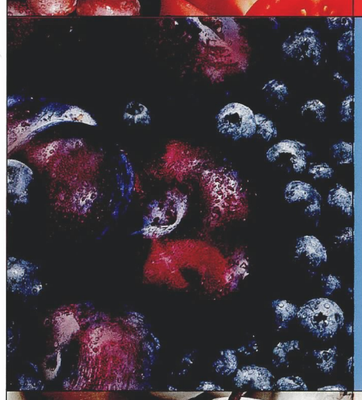
Green Leafy greens (collard, mustard, and turnip greens, swiss chard, kale, spinach and lettuces), asparagus, green peppers, broccoli, green beans, peas, green cabbage, green onion, Brussels sprouts, okra, zucchini, Chinese cabbage (napa/bok choy), green apples, green grapes, honeydew melon, kiwifruit, limes



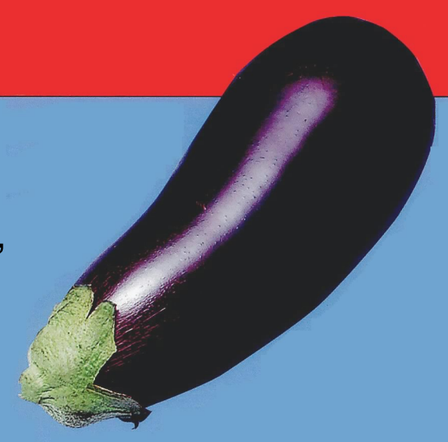
Yellow-Orange Carrots, summer squash, corn sweet potatoes, butternut squash, pumpkin, yellow peppers, rutabagas, cantaloupe, grapefruit, lemons, nectarines, oranges, peaches, pineapples, tangerines, apricots, mangoes, papayas



Red Tomatoes, spaghetti sauce, tomato juice, tomato soup, red peppers, red onions, beets, red cabbage, kidney beans, apples, pink grapefruit, red grapes, strawberries, cherries, watermelon, raspberries, cranberries, pomegranates



Blue-purple Eggplant, purple grapes, plums, raisins, blueberries, blackberries, purple figs, dried plums, black currants



White Cauliflower, mushrooms, white beans, onions, garlic, parsnips, shallots, turnips, ginger, jicama, bananas, pears

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What's in Fruits and Vegetables?

Fruits and vegetables are a great source of many vitamins, minerals, and fiber the body needs. They are also packed with hundreds of naturally occurring substances called phytochemicals that may help protect against many diseases. And most fruits and vegetables are low in fat and calories.

VITAMINS

Fruits and vegetables provide many important vitamins, like vitamin A and vitamin C. The body needs vitamins to do many things. For example, some vitamins help the body produce energy. Others help keep skin healthy. Many adults do not get enough vitamins A and C through the foods they eat. The best way to get vitamins is to eat the whole foods that contain them like fruits and vegetables.

MINERALS

Fruits and vegetables provide many important minerals, like potassium and magnesium. Many adults do not get enough potassium and magnesium. The body needs potassium to help maintain healthy blood pressure and magnesium to help maintain healthy bones.

FIBER

Most fruits and vegetables are a good source of fiber. One type of fiber can help lower cholesterol. It also slows down digestion so that the body can absorb more nutrients and better control blood sugar levels. Another type of fiber helps you get rid of waste and keeps you regular.

PHYTOCHEMICALS

Phytochemicals (fight-o-chemicals) are naturally occurring substances in fruits and vegetables. Phytochemicals may help fight to protect your health. Fruits and vegetables have hundreds of phytochemicals. Phytochemicals work together with vitamins and minerals to promote good health.

Here are just a few examples of the Phytochemicals found in fruits and vegetables:

- **Carotenoids** in red and yellow-orange fruits and vegetables (such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots)
- **Lycopene** in tomato-based foods (such as tomato sauce, tomato paste)
- **Lutein and zeaxanthin** in leafy greens (such as collard greens, spinach, romaine lettuce)
- **Flavanoids** in brightly colored fruits and vegetables (such as blueberries, cherries, strawberries)

The vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables combine for a health-protecting and disease-fighting effect that you can't get from vitamin pills. Only a variety of fruits and vegetables give you all of these nutrients together.

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Why Eating Fruits and Vegetables is Important for Adults

People who eat 2½ to 4½ cups of fruits and vegetables a day have a lower chance of getting many cancers.

HELP MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT

When combined with an active lifestyle, eating a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables may help you manage your weight. Most are low in calories and fat. And many have lots of water and fiber to help you feel full.

You can eat fewer calories and still eat a satisfying amount of food when you eat more fruits and vegetables at meals and less foods high in fat and added sugars. Eat fruits and vegetables raw or steamed and use very small amounts of added sauces, butters, or oils.

LOWER YOUR CHANCES FOR SOME CANCERS

People who eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables have a lower chance of getting cancers of the oral cavity and pharynx, larynx, lung, esophagus, stomach, and colon/rectum.

LOWER YOUR CHANCES FOR HEART DISEASE & STROKE

Heart-healthy diets emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. They include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts. They are also low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars. People who consume such diets are likely to lower their blood pressure and cholesterol and have a reduced risk of stroke and other cardiovascular diseases.

REDUCE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

In the DASH study (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), people with high blood pressure followed a special eating plan. These people saw their blood pressure go down after only one month. The plan included 4 to 5 cups of Fruits and vegetables a day and 2 to 3 Servings of low-fat dairy foods.

The DASH eating plan is low in saturated fat and cholesterol. The plan allows only very small amounts of red meat, sweets, and sugar-containing drinks. It also includes moderate amounts of whole grains, fish, poultry, and nuts.

People in the DASH study with the lowest sodium intake had the biggest fall in blood pressure. Too much sodium causes blood pressure to rise. Potassium counteracts the effect of sodium on blood pressure. Yet, African Americans get only half their potassium needs. Fruits and vegetables are naturally high in potassium and low in sodium.

LOWER YOUR CHANCES FOR DIABETES

Obesity and diet are strong risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes. So it is important to be at a healthy weight. Get enough exercise and eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables every day.