

Food \$ense



Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program
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Vary Your Veggies

Vegetables are a very important part of our diet. People who eat more fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to have less risk of some chronic diseases. Vegetables provide nutrients vital for health and maintenance. Different vegetables are rich in different nutrients, so try to eat a variety. The MyPyramid Food Guidance System organizes vegetables into five subgroups based on their nutrient content.

Dark green vegetables include all dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, romaine lettuce, kale, collard greens, etc., and broccoli. At the 2000-calorie level, three cups per week are recommended.

Orange vegetables include squash, carrots, pumpkin and sweet potatoes. Two cups per week are recommended at the 2000-calorie level.

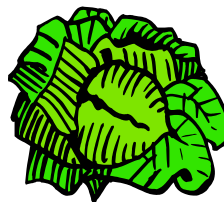
Dry beans and peas include black beans, garbanzo beans, kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, soybeans, as well as others. The recommended amount is three cups/week.

Starchy vegetables are corn, green peas, potatoes, and green lima beans. At the 2000-calorie level, three cups per week are recommended. It's easy to get too much from this subcategory. Limiting the amount to what is recommended will help maintain calorie balance.

Other vegetables are the largest subcategory of vegetables. It includes all the vegetables that do

not fit into the previous four subcategories. Some examples are: asparagus, beets, cauliflower, green beans, iceberg lettuce, tomatoes and zucchini. The recommended amount is six and one-half cups per week.

Most people do not eat the recommended amount and variety of vegetables. Try new vegetables regularly. They may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut up, or mashed. Sauces or seasoning can add calories, fat, and sodium to vegetables, so be careful about what you put on them. Not only will eating a variety of vegetables help keep you healthy, it keeps meals interesting, too!



MyPyramid Salad

Romaine lettuce—3 leaves per person

Apple—1/2 apple per person, sliced)

Vanilla yogurt—1/4 cup per person)

Granola-type cereal—1/4 cup per person

Walnuts, chopped— 1 tablespoon per person

1. Wash lettuce and apples.
2. Cut apples in quarters, remove core and cut into slices.
3. Tear lettuce leaves into pieces on a plate.
4. Top with apple slices, yogurt, cereal and walnuts.

Why Dark Green Vegetables?

All vegetables are healthy. But dark green vegetables offer the health benefits of lowering the risk of some cancers, improving vision health and building strong bones and teeth.

Here are some ways to get more green:

1) Increase fiber with broccoli. Broccoli provides both soluble and insoluble fiber; vitamins A, C and E (important antioxidants for preventing damage to cells in the body from free-radicals) and vitamin K for bone health.

2) Vary your leafy greens. Leafy green vegetables, such as lettuces, come in varying shades of green. The lighter the green, the less vitamins and minerals they contain. The darker the green, the more vitamins and minerals they contain, such as A, C and folate, which is good for preventing birth defects. Spinach, a dark leafy green, contains lutein, which is good for eye health.

3) Try growing greens such as spinach, kale, turnip, broccoli, or romaine lettuce in a large pot in a sunny spot.

4) Shop for fresh dark green vegetables when farmer's markets start up this summer. Don't forget to look for asparagus in May!

You can eat your green vegetables raw or cooked...just be sure to include a variety of them in your meals.

Stepping Up to a Healthy Lifestyle

How Much Physical Activity?

- Get 30 minutes to reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes.
- Get 60 minutes to reduce your disease risk, AND avoid weight gain.
- Get 60-90 minutes to reduce your disease risk, AND keep off the weight you've lost.



Kids Can Choose Variety

- Combine 3-5 different colors of veggies from the Vegetable Food Group for a nutrient rich snack of veggies and dip.
- Make the recipe of the back of this newsletter with your child.
- Ask your child to name vegetables to add to the grocery list.
- Let your child pick a new veggie to take home and try.
- Be willing to try new foods and food combinations with your child.

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How Expensive is it to Eat Healthy?

How do you buy lettuce and other greens—as a “head” or pre-cut in bags? The bags of lettuce mixes are convenient—just take it home, empty into a bowl—salad! But how much does that convenience really cost you? Here's what a recent check of store prices found:

Bagged salads:

Hearts of Romaine \$3.49/10 oz. (5 cups) = .70/cup
Lettuce Mix \$2.79/11 oz. (5½ cups) = .51/cup
Iceberg Salad Mix \$1.99/16 oz. (8 cups) = .25/cup

One head Romaine \$1.48 (8-10 cups) = .15/cup
One head Iceberg \$.97 (8-10 cups) = .10/cup



So, you could save up to \$143 per year by buying heads of Romaine instead of the mixes! If your family is not used to eating romaine or other colorful salad ingredients, try mixing them for a while. (Check Sue Keeney's tips for keeping lettuce fresh.)



Dear Sue Keeney ...

Meet Sue Keeney--your source of research-based information about nutrition and health! Readers of all ages like Sue's practical tips on eating for good health, stretching the food dollar & more!

Dear Sue,

Every time I buy lettuce for salads, it gets brown before I use it up. What am I doing wrong?

Edith Wright



Dear Edith,

Buy the freshest lettuce you can from a farmer's market or a grocery store you know that typically has good produce.

When you get home from the store, set the lettuce in the sink to drain any excess water from it!

To keep lettuce fresh, completely wrap it in a paper towel and put it in a zip lock bag. The key to keeping your lettuce fresh is keeping it dry! The paper towel will absorb moisture. If you are storing lettuce in a container, line the bottom of the container with a layer of paper towels.

Avoid storing lettuce with apples, pears or bananas. These fruits release ethylene gas, a natural ripening agent that will cause the lettuce to develop brown spots and decay quickly. Toss lettuce that looks slimy or has black spots. The slime is from bacteria and the black spots are usually mold.

Remember to always wash your produce in clean water before eating it.

Sue Keeney

Help Keep Your Family Safe

Fresh fruits and vegetables can occasionally become contaminated with pathogens, harmful bacteria or viruses that can make people sick. Common signs of foodborne illness include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache and fever. These signs usually occur within 12 to 72 hours from the time the food was eaten. To reduce your risk and help keep your family healthy, follow these steps for washing fresh fruits and vegetables.

Wash your hands and cooking areas

- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Wash all countertops, cutting boards and utensils.

Wash the produce

- Wash all whole fruits and vegetables before preparing them, even if the skin or rind will not be eaten.
- **Wash all bagged produce, even if the bag says 'pre-washed'.**
- Wash fruits and vegetables under clean running water in a clean sink. (Don't soak in water.)
- For firm fruits and vegetables, such as potatoes or melons, scrub them with a clean brush.
- For soft fruits and vegetables, gently rub with your hands to loosen dirt.
- Remove outer leaves of lettuce or cabbage before washing.
- To wash berries, parsley and greens, put them in a colander and gently turn under running water.

(Produce washes are expensive and are not recommended to clean fresh produce.)

Remember: to help prevent food-borne illness, wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly. While cooking may be the only way to ensure safety of produce, washing fruits and vegetables will help keep your family safe.

Packing a Safe Lunch 101

- Always keep it clean. Make sure hands, food preparation surfaces and utensils are clean. Wash fruits and vegetables before packing them. And keep family pets away from the kitchen counter.
- Be sure to keep hot foods hot by using an insulated thermos. Fill the thermos with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes. Empty the thermos and then fill it with piping hot food. Keep the thermos closed until lunchtime.
- Keep cold foods cold, so invest in a freezer gel pack and insulated lunch box. Freezer gel packs will keep foods cold until lunchtime, but are not recommended for all-day storage. A frozen sandwich also works well.
- Keep a supply of shelf-stable foods for easy packing. These include crackers, peanut butter for sandwiches, packaged pudding, canned fruits or meats. Fresh fruits and vegetable are also “fast food” for lunches.



- Freeze single-sized juice boxes overnight and place in your lunch. The juice will thaw by lunchtime, but it will still be cold.
- Make sandwiches the night before. Be sure they are kept in the refrigerator until packing up to go in the morning.

NO Leftovers!! If the sandwich isn't finished at lunch, throw it out. Don't try to save it by taking it back home. The freezer gel won't hold all afternoon, not even in an insulated box.

Low-fat Vegetable Dip

- 1 cup low fat cottage cheese
- ½ cup nonfat vanilla yogurt



Choose one of these seasonings and add to above ingredients:

- Ranch: 2 tablespoons dry dressing mix
- Onion: 2 tablespoons dry onion soup mix
- Parmesan: 2-4 tablespoons grated cheese

Mix all ingredients in a blender or mash cottage cheese with a fork before mixing with yogurt. Chill 1 hour to let flavors blend. Serve with fresh vegetables.

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WNEP education is supported by the USDA Food Stamp Program, UW-Extension and local partners. Food stamps can help provide a healthy diet. To find out more about FoodShare in Marquette County, call 608-297-7550. This newsletter is provided to you as a collaborative effort between the Marquette County UW-Extension Nutrition Education Program and the Marquette County Commission on Aging. For more information on either of these programs, please contact:



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