UT Extension

Tennessee Nutrition and Consumer Education Program SP719-E

Quick Bites

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Explore the Magic of Color

Fruits and vegetables may not sound very magical, but every day there are more reasons to add more color to your plate. By eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, you will not only create a beautiful meal, but you will provide nutritious foods that are loaded with vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and fiber. These foods are generally fat-free or have the type of fats that are good for you. All this means you get plenty of bang for your buck when you fill your grocery cart with colorful foods.



What can colors do for you?

The pigments that create the vibrant colors of fruits and vegetables have been found to help prevent some diseases and improve your overall health. Make sure you get the most from these foods by eating a mix of all the colors.

Take a look below to see what each color has to offer:



Red pigment offers powerful antioxidants that protect our cells from damage and keep our heart healthy.

Orange and yellow colors provide "carotenoids" that protect the eyes, skin, membranes and the heart. These colors help your immune system.





Green colors protect your vision, lower risks of some cancers and help build strong bones and teeth.

Blue and purple colors take care of you as you age by protecting your memory function and lowering your risk for some cancers.





White fruits and vegetables help to maintain heart health and cholesterol levels.

Potent Portions

MyPyramid.gov provides recommendations for the amount of fruits and vegetables you need based on age, gender and level of physical activity. Portions are measured by cup size. Below are some examples of some hard-to-measure foods that equal one cup.

- 12 baby carrots
- ½ cup raisins counts as 1 cup whole fruit
- one small apple (the size of a tennis ball)
- 2 cups of loose leaf lettuce (loosely packed) counts as 1 cup fresh vegetables

Top 6 Ways To Buy More Fruits and Vegetables Without Breaking Your Bank

Fresh foods or foods that can "go bad" or spoil can seem more expensive than items that can stay on the shelf longer, like crackers and cereal. Here are some easy ways to add more colorful fruits and vegetables without worrying about wasting food or money:



1. Buy frozen. Frozen fruits and veggies have just as many nutrients as fresh produce, plus you can store them and just use the exact amount you need.
2. Buy canned. Go for the "No-Salt-Added" and "Canned in Own Juice" products.
3. Buy 100 percent juice. Don't waste your money and calories on a juice drink. Many of these drinks may contain just 10 percent juice or less, but still "look" like it is real juice.



4. Buy in season. You can get your favorite fruit or veggie in the store year-round, if you are willing to pay for it. Seasonal foods like apples in fall, oranges in winter, strawberries in spring and corn in summer can allow you to buy fresh without paying too much.



5. Whole fruit and vegetables cost less than pre-cut ones. Taking a little extra time to cut your own produce can save you a lot of green at the checkout.
6. Make home-made, simple dishes. Fruits and vegetables can be steamed, blanched, microwaved or even eaten raw with great taste and few ingredients.

Coloring Your Plates



As you plan meals, imagine what each plate will look like as you serve the meal to your family. Since most of us eat with our eyes first, you can grab the attention of those "picky eaters" by adding as many brightly colored fruits and vegetables to the meal as you can. Then complete the meal "experience" by engaging the other senses. Put together meals that include a fruit or vegetable aromatic smell, like cooked apples or grilled onions. For a variation in texture, include a food that is soft and then something crunchy. Plan for a cool food, like a simple salad, along with your hot main course. Don't feel like you have to cover the wonderful tastes with heavy sauces, butter, salt or sugar. Let the true taste of the food shine through. Those "picky eaters" may be surprised by what the colors have to offer.

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