

# Fruits and Vegetables Month

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## Yes, even *you* can change your diet!

By now, we all know that increasing fruits and veggies in the diet (can you say Mediterranean?) has numerous health benefits. Some of these include increased calcium uptake, decreased risk for metabolic syndrome (and therefore obesity), and decreased risk of vascular inflammation and heart disease. But the problem is getting any of us to make life-long change in habits when we sit down at the table!

It's tempting to assume that there's no hope of making lifestyle changes if one's current diet is **far** from the healthy goals being suggested in this newsletter. But if that describes you, don't give up just yet. A recent study suggests that even if your current diet is really bad, lifestyle change is still possible. In fact, the researchers concluded that those who began the study with diets highest in meats and lowest in fruits & vegetables, were the ones who were most successful in adhering to the new diet! Interestingly, they also found that women who were married were more likely to pull off the new dietary changes than those who were single. We'll let you draw your own conclusions on that one...

## Avocado Salsa Recipe

Fulfill vegetables needs with this fun new recipe

### Ingredients

- 1 (16 ounce) package frozen corn kernels, thawed
- 2 (2.25 ounce) cans sliced ripe olives, drained
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 avocados - peeled, pitted and diced

### Directions

1. In a large bowl, mix corn, olives, red bell pepper and onion.
2. In a small bowl, mix garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, cider vinegar, oregano, salt and pepper. Pour into the corn mixture and toss to coat. Cover and chill in the refrigerator 8 hours, or overnight.
3. Stir avocados into the mixture before serving.

## Fruit and Vegetable Needs

On average, men from 19-50+ years of age need 2 cups of fruit and 2 ½ to 3 cups of vegetables per day. Women, of the same age range, need 1 ½ to 2 cups of fruits and 2 to 2 ½ cups of vegetables. These servings can be in many different forms.

For example, fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried. Vegetables can come in all of the same forms and then can be eaten cooked or raw. The possibilities are endless!

## Tips for Meeting your Needs

There are so many easy ways to include fruits and veggies in your daily diet. Starting with breakfast, you can add strawberries, blueberries, or bananas to your cereal, oatmeal, waffles, or pancakes. If you prefer eggs in the morning, it is so simple to add some tomatoes, broccoli, and/or mushrooms to your omelet. Not only does this give it more flavor, but makes it more nutritious.

## Benefits of Adding Fruits and Veggies

Fruits and vegetables are high in vitamins and minerals; eating both may decrease the risk of contracting various diseases.

Some important nutrients found in fruits and vegetables include:

- **Fiber** – navy beans, kidney beans, black beans, lima beans, chick peas, artichokes
- **Potassium** – sweet potatoes, tomatoes paste, white potatoes, cooked greens, prune juice
- **Vitamin A** – pumpkin, carrots, spinach, collard greens, cantaloupe, red peppers, kale
- **Vitamin C** – kiwi, strawberries, broccoli, pineapple, Brussels sprouts, oranges

In addition, fruits and veggies make for a great low calorie snacks. Try one of these:

- a medium-size apple (72 calories)
- 1 cup of grapes (100 calories)
- 1 cup of blueberries (83 calories)
- 1 cup of carrots (45 calories)
- 1 cup of steamed green beans (44 calories)
- 1 cup of broccoli (30 calories)

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/index.html>; Zazpe et al. (2010) EJM 49 (2), 91-9;  
[http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy\\_eating/fruits\\_vegetables.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/fruits_vegetables.htm)