



# Live Healthy Georgia – Seniors Taking Charge!



June 2009 Newsletter

## Stay Healthy with Fruits & Veggies

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Summer is one of the best times of the year to find yummy fruits and vegetables. Grocery stores and home gardens are filled with enticing blueberries, strawberries, tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, and zucchini just waiting to be added to your favorite summertime recipes. Not only are these foods packed with flavor when bought in season, they are packed with nutrition, too!

Fruits and vegetables are a very important part of the diet and help keep us healthy in many ways. All fruits and veggies provide vitamins and minerals, fiber and water – all of which we need each and every day.

**Vitamins and minerals** help our bodies use energy and are needed to maintain certain body structures, like bones and proteins. **Fiber** keeps our intestinal tract healthy by keeping food moving through our bodies and providing nourishment for the helpful bacteria that lives inside our gut.

**Water** is also vitally important to our health. Our bodies are mostly made of water and need a constant supply, since we lose lots of water each day through sweat, urination, and breathing. Without water, many

processes in our bodies could not take place!

Fruits and vegetables also contain several naturally occurring compounds called phytochemicals, which help protect our bodies from diseases such as cancer and heart disease. Phytochemicals also give fruits and veggies their color. It is important to consume a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables each week, because they all offer protection in different ways. Some phytochemicals should even be eaten everyday! Phytochemicals also each have their own unique health benefits.

**Blue/Purple/Deep Red:** These fruits and veggies contain anthocyanins and proanthocyanins. These phytochemicals protect our bodies from excess oxidative stress, inflammation, and tumor formation, all factors that can lead to heart disease and cancer if conditions are favorable. **Eat some each week!**



**Try:** Blueberries, purple grapes, plums, raspberries, dark cherries & eggplant & blackberries

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**Red:** Red fruits and veggies contain lycopene, which may help protect against certain cancers, such as breast and prostate cancers. **Eat 1 serving each day!**



**Try:** Tomatoes, tomato sauce, cherries, strawberries, grapefruit, watermelon, red bell peppers and radishes

**Orange:** Orange fruits and veggies contain alpha- and beta-carotene. These compounds reduce oxidative stress, help our bodies use vitamin A, and maintain healthy eyes, bones and immune systems. **Eat some each week!**



**Try:** Carrots, sweet potatoes, cantaloupe, mango, oranges, papaya, tangerines, and apricots

**Yellow/Green:** Yellow and light green fruits and veggies contain lutein and zeaxanthin. Light green veggies also contain beta-carotene. Lutein and zeaxanthin may prevent age-related macular degeneration, which is the leading cause of blindness in older adults. **Eat 1 serving each day!**



**Try:** Yellow bell peppers, corn, squash, lemons, artichokes, lettuce, wax beans, arugula, kale, spinach, chard, collards & mustard greens

**Dark Green:** Cruciferous veggies, often dark green, are associated with reduced risk of several types of cancers. These veggies provide indoles and isothiocyanates, which may help eliminate carcinogens or interfere with cancer cell signals. Many of these veggies also contain folate, which can protect against colon cancer in those with no previous history of colon cancer. **Eat 3-5 servings each week!**



**Try:** Broccoli, green cabbage, Brussels sprouts, collards, kale, kohlrabi, turnips, rutabaga, bok choy, arugula, wasabi, watercress, horseradish, radish greens, mustard greens, asparagus, and cauliflower

**White/Light green:** White veggies contain compounds called allyl sulfurs. Allyl sulfurs can help prevent cancer growth and promote the death of cancer cells. Some veggies in this category can also help prevent heart disease by reducing total and LDL-cholesterol levels. **Eat some each day with food!**



**Try:** Garlic, onions, scallions, chives and leeks

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**Tip:** Crush garlic 30 minutes before heating to allow the protective allyl sulfurs to be fully released.

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Fruits and vegetables that have not yet been mentioned, such as apples, pears, parsnips, peas, white potatoes, etc. also have unique health benefits.

It is recommended that older adults **eat 7-9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.** Let's break it down.

**Fruit:** Depending on activity level, women should have 2-3 servings per day, and men should have 3-4 servings per day.

**A serving of fruit** equals 1 cup sliced/diced/mashed fruit. The following examples also equal 1 serving of fruit: 1 small or ½ large apple, 1 medium pear or grapefruit, 3 medium or 2 large plums, 1 large banana, orange or peach, 8 large strawberries, and 1 small watermelon wedge.

**Vegetables:** Depending on activity level, women should have 4-5 servings per day, and men should have 5-6 servings per day.

**A serving of vegetables** equals 1 cup cooked/chopped/mashed veggies or 2 cups raw veggies. The following examples also equal 1 serving of veggies: 1 large sweet potato, ear of corn or green/red pepper, 2 large celery stalks & 2 medium carrots.

1 cup 100% juices also equal 1 serving of fruits or veggies.

Definitions for “small”, “medium” and “large” depend on the food. These definitions as well as tips on ways to increase your intake of fruits and vegetables can be found at the My Pyramid website.

Frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables have the same health benefits as fresh ones do and may be easier to store or buy in bulk. Read nutrition labels on food packages, and choose those with minimal amounts of fat, sodium, and sugar.

## **Quick Recipe Idea:** Roasted Corn with Basil-Shallot Vinaigrette

- 3 cups fresh corn kernels
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot
- 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 450°F. Toss corn and oil to coat, and spread out on large baking sheet. Bake, stirring once, until some kernels begin to brown (about 20 minutes). Combine other ingredients in medium bowl. Add corn; toss to coat. Serve warm or cold. Serves 4.

### **Per each ½ cup serving:**

*165 calories; 8 g fat (1 g sat, 6 g mono); 0 mg cholesterol; 23 g carbohydrate; 4 g protein; 3 g fiber; 163 mg sodium; 332 mg potassium*

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**For more information, see:**

**USDA My Pyramid at:**

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/index.html> (see “*Inside the Pyramid*”)

**2005 Dietary Guidelines at:**

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/>  
(see *Chapter 5 and Appendix A2*)

**Fruits and Veggies, More Matters at:**

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/>