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Vegetable Group: Vary Your Veggies

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Vegetables are an important part of a healthy and tasty diet. Vegetables give us:

- Fresh flavors
- Bright colors
- Different shapes and textures
- Fiber
- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Low calories, fat, and sodium
- No cholesterol

Eating vegetables can help prevent obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

A large number of our calories should come from vegetables. Nutrients in vegetables vary. That is why we should eat many different kinds. Dark green and orange vegetables have many key vitamins and minerals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Dietary Guidelines recommend several servings of dark green and orange vegetables each week. More information can be found at <http://www.MyPyramid.gov>. You can also fill out MyPyramid Worksheet (NEP-201C). Look at the chart below to see how much of each vegetable you should eat each week.

**Serving It Up**

A serving is:

- ½ cup cooked vegetable, such as lima beans or corn
- 1 cup raw, leafy greens or tossed salad
- A medium vegetable, such as a carrot
- ½ cup vegetable juice, such as tomato juice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Daily Calorie Level/Weekly Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark green</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetables</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetables</td>
<td>1.5 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starchy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetables</td>
<td>2.5 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetables</td>
<td>5.5 cups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Save Those Vitamins!
How you store, prepare, and cook vegetables can make a difference. Some vitamins and minerals float away in water. Some are killed by heat, light, and air. Vitamin C and the B-vitamins are easy to kill. To keep as many vitamins and minerals in food as possible, use these tips:

Storage
▲ Store vegetables whole.
▲ Do not wash before storing.
▲ Refrigerate vegetables in the vegetable crisper.
▲ Keep onions, potatoes, and squash in a cool, dry place.
▲ Store onions and potatoes in separate places.

Preparation
▲ Prepare close to mealtime.
▲ Trim bruised and wilted leaves and tough stems.
▲ Leave the skins on or thinly peel.
▲ Wash quickly – do not soak.
▲ Cut into larger pieces.
▲ Serve at once.

Cooking
▲ Cook just until done.
▲ Use very little water.
▲ Bring water to a boil.
▲ Add vegetables.
▲ Cover pan and turn heat to medium.
▲ Cook until tender.
▲ Do not overcook; overcooking destroys nutrients.

Did You Know?
▲ Different types of vegetables have different amounts of vitamins and minerals.
▲ Dark green vegetables such as broccoli, collards, and spinach have vitamins A and C, B-vitamins, iron, and calcium.
▲ Vitamin A helps keep skin healthy. It protects against infection and helps your vision. Deep yellow vegetables such as carrots and yams have vitamin A.
▲ The B-vitamins help you use energy from foods. They keep skin healthy. They also control appetite and digestion. B-vitamins are found in starchy vegetables such as potatoes, corn, and lima beans.
▲ Vegetables such as beets, cabbage, green beans, green peppers, and tomatoes have vitamins A and C. Vitamin C keeps gums and blood vessels healthy and helps fight infection.
▲ Vegetables are low in calories.

Written by Kathy Daly-Koziel, former EFNEP Coordinator
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