Get Up & Move!

Parent Newsletter Series 1: April

Vegetables
It is important for you and your children to eat vegetables because they provide nutrients that are vital for health and maintenance of the body. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut up or mashed. In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups or raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 serving from the vegetable group. Vegetables are organized into 5 subgroups, based on their nutrient content. Some commonly eaten vegetables in each subgroup are:

**Dark green vegetables:**
Broccoli, dark green leafy lettuce, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach

**Orange vegetables:**
Acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes

**Dry beans and peas:**
Black beans, garbanzo beans (chick peas), kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans, soy beans, tofu, split peas

**Starchy vegetables:**
Corn, green peas, lima beans, potatoes

**Other vegetables:**
Artichokes, asparagus, bean sprouts, beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, green or red peppers, onions, mushrooms, tomatoes, zucchini

**Servings**
Girls ages 9-13 should consume 2 cups of vegetables daily while boys should consume 2 ½ cups daily.

**Health Benefits**
Eating a diet rich in vegetables may reduce the risk for many chronic diseases and conditions such as:

- Stroke
- Stomach, mouth, and colon-rectum cancer
- Bone loss
- Cardiovascular disease
- Kidney stones
- Weight gain
**Nutrients**

Vegetables are one of the main sources of many nutrients in you and your children’s diets. Vegetables also tend to be low in fat or calories and have no cholesterol. Vegetables are important sources of potassium, dietary fiber, folate, vitamin A, vitamin E, and vitamin C.

- Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain healthy blood pressure. Vegetable sources of potassium include sweet and white potatoes, white beans, tomato products, spinach, lentils and winter squash
- Dietary fiber from vegetables helps to reduce blood cholesterol levels and may lower the risk of heart disease. Fiber is also important to proper bowel function. It helps to reduce constipation and diverticulosis. Fiber-containing foods, such as vegetables, help provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories.
- Vitamin A keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps to protect against infections.
- Vitamin E helps protect vitamin A and essential fatty acids from cell oxidation.
- Vitamin C helps heal cuts and wounds and keeps teeth and gums healthy. Vitamin C also aids in iron absorption.

**Tips for Eating More Vegetables**

- Buy fresh vegetables in season. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave.
- Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare. Buy packages of pre-cut vegetables if you do not have time to cut your own.
- Use a microwave to cook fresh and frozen vegetables quickly.
- Vary your vegetables to keep meals and snacks interesting.

**For best nutritional value:**

- Select vegetables with potassium more often, such as sweet potatoes, white potatoes, white beans, tomato products, beet greens, soybeans, spinach, squash and lentils
- Try to limit the use of sauces or seasonings that add additional fat, calories, and sodium to your vegetables
- Prepare more foods from fresh ingredients to lower sodium intake. Most sodium in the food supply comes from packaged or processed foods.
- Buy canned vegetables labeled “no salt added.” If you want to add a little salt it will likely be less than the amount in regular canned products.

**At Meals:**

- Plan some meals around a vegetables main dish, such as vegetable stir-fry or soup. Try a main dish salad for lunch, but go easy on the salad dressing.
- Include a green salad with your dinner on most nights.
- Add chopped vegetables to dishes like lasagna, pasta sauce and meatloaf.
- Try ordering a vegetable pizza with mushrooms, green peppers, and onions.
- Use pureed, cooked vegetables such as potatoes to thicken soups, stews, and gravies.
- Grill vegetable kabobs as part of a barbeque meal.
Vegetable tips for children:
- Set a good example for your children by eating vegetables with meals and snacks.
- Let children decide on the dinner vegetables or what goes into salads.
- Depending on their age, children can help shop for, clean, peel, or cut up vegetables.
- Use cut-up vegetables as part of afternoon snacks.
- Children often prefer foods served separately. Try serving two vegetables separately instead of mixed vegetables.

Keep It Safe:
- Wash vegetables before preparing or eating them. Under clean, running water, rub vegetables briskly with your hands to remove dirt. Dry the vegetables after washing them.
- Keep vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry and seafood at all times.

Source: (www.mypyramid.gov)