

Fruit and Vegetables for Cancer Survivors



This fact sheet is one in a series developed for cancer survivors who have finished active treatment. Eating well and maintaining a healthy weight may help lower the chances of some cancers returning and improve overall health.

We've all heard that we should eat more fruit and vegetables but sometimes it feels like an effort. It's easy to lose creativity in the kitchen and to forget how simple it is to achieve the recommended minimum two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables a day.

Why fruit and vegetables are important

Reminding yourself of the benefits of fruit and veg may help motivate you to include these essential foods in your meals as often as possible. Research shows that eating fruit and vegetables every day helps to:

- lower the risk of heart disease, blood pressure, cholesterol and some forms of cancer
- maintain a healthy weight
- reduce constipation
- improve the control of diabetes.

As well as offering a variety of tastes, fruit and vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, energy, fibre and water. These help our bodies keep functioning every day.

How do I start?

Start as soon as you begin your day! Breakfast is a good opportunity to give your body a boost with some fresh, unprocessed food.

Breakfast

- Add fresh or dried fruit to breakfast cereals.
- Top toast or muffins with slices of fruit, e.g. bananas.
- Have fresh fruit with yoghurt – grapes, banana and strawberries are easy to add.
- Add onion, capsicum, mushrooms and chopped tomatoes to an omelette.
- Serve sautéed mushrooms and grilled tomatoes on bruschetta.
- Blend soft fruit such as bananas or berries (frozen or fresh) with skim or low-fat milk or plain yoghurt for a smoothie.
- Have half a glass of unsweetened fruit juice (but note that juice should only count as one serve of fruit or vegetables a day).

Lunch

- Add extra salad to sandwiches, rolls or wraps.
- Try different salads such as Greek salad, green bean and tomato salad, or tabouleh.
- Have some vegetable soup, a vegetable lasagne or vegetable frittata with salad.
- Eat a baked or steamed potato topped with coleslaw, baked beans, or tomato and cheese.

Snacks

- Serve crunchy raw vegetables (e.g. carrots, celery, capsicum) as a snack.
- Eat fruit as snacks between meals and keep fruit available in a fruit bowl.
- Have dried fruit and nuts on hand to snack on throughout the day.



How big is a serve?

A serve of fresh fruit is 150 g (or a medium apple). A serve of fresh vegetables is 75 g (or half a medium potato). However, if you get into the habit of eating fruit and vegetables as snacks and adding them to your main meals, you won't have to keep counting! For more information on serving sizes, see the fact sheet *What Is a Serve?*



Fruit and Vegetables

Dinner

- Fill at least half your dinner plate with vegetables or salad. Serve at least three types of vegetables.
- Add extra vegetables to dishes such as casseroles, stews, curries, soups, and pasta, rice or noodle dishes. Potatoes, peas, carrots, capsicum and tinned corn are quick and easy to add.
- Try vegetarian versions of old favourites – e.g. spinach lasagne, eggplant moussaka, or a chickpea and vegetable curry.
- Stuffed vegetables, such as capsicums filled with tuna and rice, or large mushrooms filled with spinach and cheese, are filling and nutritious.
- Homemade vegetable soup, such as pumpkin or minestrone, is easy to make and you can use a wide range of vegetables. You can also add extra vegetables to low-fat tinned or packet soups.
- If you're having an easy meal such as pasta or pizza, include a side salad. If you get takeaway, choose at least one vegetable dish.
- Add vegies to stir-fries, e.g. carrots, mushrooms, celery, capsicum, beans, bok choy and baby corn.
- For dessert, choose fresh, canned (in natural juice) or stewed fruit, make a fruit salad or fruit kebabs, or add fruit pieces when preparing jelly.

tips

Adding flavour to meals

- Use tinned or fresh tomatoes as the base for a pasta or rice dish.
- Purée vegetables to make a low-fat sauce.
- Make cooked vegetables more flavoursome with added herbs and spices.

Two easy recipes

Apricot chicken recipe

- 6–8 chicken thigh fillets, sliced and with fat removed
- 1 packet French onion soup mix
- 410 g can of apricot halves in syrup
- 1 brown onion, diced

Preheat oven to 180°C. Place chicken and onion in casserole dish. Sprinkle with French onion soup mix and add can of apricot halves and syrup. Bake for 90 minutes. Serve with steamed vegetables and rice or couscous.

Fruit crumble

- 800 g tin of fruit, e.g. peaches or mixed berries
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 2/3 cup oats
- 2/3 cup plain flour

Preheat oven to 180°C. Drain fruit and place in an ovenproof dish. Place other ingredients into a bowl and mix well. Sprinkle crumble topping over fruit and pat down firmly. Bake for 25 minutes. Serve with low-fat ice-cream or frozen yoghurt.

This fact sheet provides general information only and is not a substitute for individual health advice. You should talk to your doctor or dietitian about your specific situation.

Cancer Council NSW 153 Dowling Street,
Woolloomooloo NSW 2011

Email feedback@nswcc.org.au

© Cancer Council NSW 2012. **ABN** 51 116 463 846

