

Get fruity!

This week, we challenge you to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day, and to polish up your flirting skills.

According to experts, eating **five portions** of fruit and vegetables a day helps to combat heart disease and certain types of cancer. They're full of fibre, vitamins and minerals which are good for your general health, skin and energy levels.

What's a portion?

If you're confused about what a portion actually means, it's about 80g of fruit or vegetables. That's one piece of medium sized fruit, like an apple or a banana, or a handful of berries. For a more detailed explanation of portion sizes, visit **Nutrition basics**. As for what to include, eat a variety, because different fruits and vegetables contain different nutrients. Potatoes don't count as they're considered part of your daily intake of complex carbohydrates. But other root vegetables, such as carrots, swede and parsnips, all contribute. A glass of fruit or vegetable juice counts as one portion but because the fibre has been extracted, ensure the other four portions are in solid form.

Cooked fruit and vegetables are good choices, but some nutrients are lost through cooking in water. Steam and roast them for a healthier alternative. Try also to eat at least one portion of raw fruit and vegetables a day.

What counts as one portion of fresh fruit?

- melon, pineapple, or similar-sized fruit - one slice
- grapefruit, mango or similar-sized fruit - 1/2 slice
- oranges, apples, bananas, nectarine, pear or similar sized fruit - one fruit
- kiwis, plums, apricots or similar sized fruit - two fruits
- berries, grapes, cherries - one cupful
- one heaped tablespoon of dried fruit - for example, raisins or apricots
- three heaped tablespoons of fruit salad (in fruit juice not syrup)
- one glass (150ml) of fruit juice

Sneak fruit and vegetables into your diet

If you're not used to eating fresh produce, there are plenty of painless ways to introduce them into your diet. Try the following:

Fruit juice

Drink a glass of fresh, unsweetened juice with breakfast. Or make a fruit smoothie. Simply blend your favourite fruits with either fruit juice or yoghurt for a healthy, tasty drink. Use a variety of coloured fruit to get a range of different nutrients. Try the following recipes from bbc.co.uk/food.

Rick Stein's fruity smoothie

Red rooster smoothie

Tang smoothie

Wake me up smoothie

Coconut milk smoothie

Mixed fruit and vegetable juice

Use a juicer to extract the juice from fruit and vegetables - you'll be able to consume more than you'd usually eat in one hit. Try the following recipes from bbc.co.uk/food:

Beetroot, carrot and apple juice

The breakfast kicker

Snacks

Eat a piece of fruit instead of chocolate or crisps to cope with the mid-afternoon energy slump.

Desserts

If you really can't resist a dessert, a portion of fruit can be counted if it's part of a fruity pudding but the same rules apply in that a portion should contain about 80g of fruit. So a big piece of cake with a cherry on top doesn't count! Try some of the following from bbc.co.uk/food:

Fruit salads

Fruit kebabs

Baked apples with fruit and nuts

Honey nut baked fresh figs

You can also use fruit as a topping for ice cream instead of shop-bought sauces. Either use them as they come or pop them in the microwave for a couple of minutes until the juices start to run and pour them over the top. Blueberries work particularly well for this.

Banana milkshake - for one milkshake, blend one ripe banana and three quarters of a glass of semi-skimmed milk until smooth and frothy. Add a teaspoon of honey if you have a sweet tooth.

Fruity facts

- Raspberries are one of the best fruit sources of fibre.
- Oranges are one of the least expensive ways to get your recommended daily dose of vitamin C.
- Cranberries help to prevent cystitis and urinary tract infections.
- Apples and bananas are better at keeping hunger pangs at bay than most other fruit.
- Blackberries and mangoes are among the few fruits to provide vitamin E.
- Blackcurrants and strawberries are one of the richest sources of vitamin C.
- Grapefruit is believed to be good for cellulite.
- Prunes, raisins, figs and sultanas are all good sources of iron.
- Fruit - particularly those rich in B and C vitamins - may help mild depression.
- Bananas are the best fruity source of potassium, which regulates nerves, heart beat and blood pressure.