

# Smart youth Choices



A Community Nutrition Education Program of  
the LSU AgCenter for Grades 5 - 8

## Vegetables Facts



What counts as one serving of vegetables?

- 1/2 cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetables
- 1 cup leafy salad greens
- 1/2 cup vegetable juice

Did you know that vegetables offer the most variety of all foods? Vegetables have nearly all the vitamins and minerals your body needs every day. Also, they have complex carbohydrates, which give you energy. Vegetables are low in fat and calories and high in fiber. So, they will fill you up on fewer calories. For these reasons, vegetables are called “nutrient-dense foods.” Vegetables may help you protect against many chronic diseases and cancers.



The Food Guide recommends that children eat 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 cups of vegetables a day, depending on their age and physical activity level. For example, 9- to 13-year old girls, who are moderately active, need 2 1/2 cups of vegetables a day (for an 1,800 calories diet).

Remember, vegetables are healthy foods. You need to eat a variety of vegetables every week. Choose from five groups:

1. Dark green vegetables (spinach, collard greens, broccoli, romaine)
2. Orange vegetables (pumpkin, carrots, sweet potatoes, winter squash)
3. Legumes (red beans, lentils, blackeye peas, pinto beans)
4. Starchy vegetables (white potatoes, corn, green peas)
5. Other vegetables (tomatoes, green beans, onion, tomato juice, lettuce)

## Use these tips to help you add more vegetables to your family's diet:

- Have vegetables as side dishes with your lunch and dinner.
- Have a salad with your lunch. Use a variety of greens, fresh vegetables in season and a light dressing.
- When you need a snack, go for healthy, delicious raw cut-up vegetables (keep them handy!).
- Try a vegetable pizza! You can use regular pizza dough and any kind of fresh vegetables you like.
- Add chopped vegetables to your pasta sauce.
- Serve baked potato once a week for dinner.
- Kids, ask your parents to take you to the farmer's market, so you can pick out your favorite vegetable. Ask you mom or dad to do the same thing.



Don't try to eat vegetables from all five groups every day; that may not be possible and you may end up consuming too many calories. Instead, count how many servings (or cups) you eat from each group every week. For example, if you need 1,800 calories a day, you will need:

- 3 cups of dark green vegetables a week
- 2 cups of orange vegetables a week
- 3 cups of legumes a week
- 3 cups of starchy vegetables a week
- 6 1/2 cups of other vegetables a week

### Author:

Heli Roy, PhD, RD Associate Professor

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