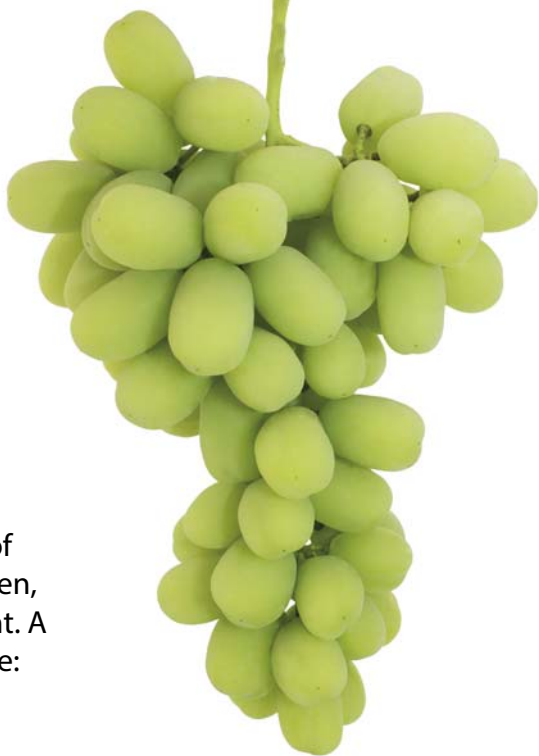


Eat *five*
a day



How much vegetables and fruit should we consume daily?

The World Health Organisation recommends a minimum of 400g (around 5 portions, 1 portion = 80g) of vegetables and fruits daily. Fresh, frozen, dried, canned and 100% juice all count. A portion of vegetables and fruit include:



- ⇒ A fruit e.g. an apple, a medium banana, 2 tangerines, 7 strawberries.
- ⇒ A small glass (150ml) of 100% fruit / vegetable juice, (only 1 glass counts as part of the 5 portions a day).
- ⇒ Smoothies- containing all pulped vegetables or fruits. These count as a maximum of two of your 5 a day however much you drink.
- ⇒ At least 80g of one variety of whole vegetable and/or fruit and at least 150ml of another variety of 100% vegetable and/or fruit juice.

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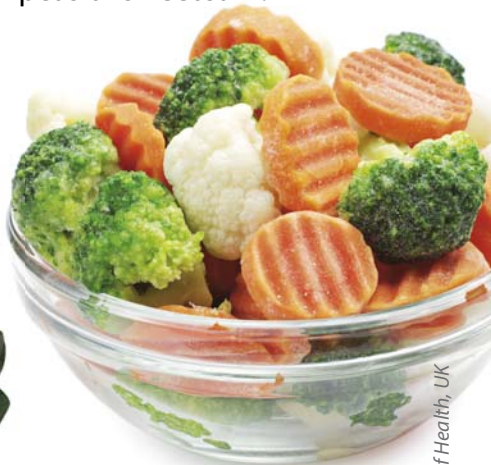
- ⇒ Pulses – 3 heaped tablespoons of baked beans or chickpeas. However much you eat, beans and pulses count as a maximum of one portion a day.



- ⇒ Cooked vegetables e.g. 3 heaped tablespoons carrots, 4 heaped tablespoons spinach, 8 florets cauliflower and 2 broccoli florets.



- ⇒ Raw vegetables e.g. 1 cereal bowl lettuce or spinach, 3 heaped tablespoons peas, half a green /bell pepper.
- ⇒ Frozen and canned vegetables - Roughly the same quantity as you would eat for a fresh portion, e.g. 3 heaped tablespoons frozen peas or sweetcorn.



- ⇒ A portion of dried fruit is around 30g e.g. 3 apricots or prunes or one heaped tablespoon raisins.

Which is the best way to prepare and cook vegetables and fruits to retain as many nutrients as possible?



- ⇒ Store fresh vegetables and fruits and use quickly.
- ⇒ Try not to peel vegetables and fruits or else peel very thinly, as many nutrients are found directly beneath the skin.
- ⇒ Wash vegetables and fruits in cold water but do not soak for a long time as Vitamins B and C are easily lost.
- ⇒ Cook vegetables quickly in small amounts of water.
- ⇒ Steaming and microwaving are preferable to boiling.

- ⇒ Try to eat cooked vegetables as soon as possible.
- ⇒ Tear up lettuce leaves with your hands.



- ⇒ Do not chop into very small pieces and use a sharp knife.
- ⇒ Use cooking water for soups and sauces to make use of any vitamins which would have leached out into the water.

How can you meet the recommended intake of vegetables and fruits?

- ➞ Try to include vegetables and fruits with each meal.
- ➞ Have a fruit or 100% fruit juice as part of your breakfast. You can add fresh fruit to your breakfast cereal.
- ➞ Include a salad with your main meal or as part of a packed lunch.
- ➞ Add fresh vegetables and fruits to your children's lunch box such as carrot sticks.
- ➞ Many traditional Maltese dishes contain a good mixture of vegetables, such as *Kusksu* and *Minestra*.
- ➞ Include vegetables in sandwiches.



- ➞ Eat raw vegetables, such as slices of cucumber, carrot sticks or cubed turnip as a snack.
- ➞ Children can be encouraged to have fresh fruit instead of sweets. Fruit milkshakes make healthy beverages instead of sugary drinks.
- ➞ Fruit kebabs or savoury kebabs with chicken and vegetables are healthy options.
- ➞ Stuffed marrows and tomatoes are tasty and attractive.
- ➞ Mashed and pureed vegetables can be incorporated into a child's diet by adding them to their usual food, such as pasta sauce, cannelloni filling, meat balls and omelettes.
- ➞ Pizza toppings can include vegetables such as peas, tomatoes, mushrooms and artichoke hearts.



Why is it important to include vegetables and fruit in our diet?

Vegetables and fruits are very important because they are:

- ⇒ A rich source of vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin A, C and K, folate and calcium.
- ⇒ High in fibre. Insoluble fibre found in bran helps prevent constipation, while soluble fibre, found in oats helps to lower cholesterol levels in the blood.
- ⇒ Low in fat: They are low in fats and calories and so help us to maintain our ideal weight.
- ⇒ Rich in anti-oxidants which help us fight cancer and heart disease.
- ⇒ Rich in phytochemicals which work together with other nutrients to protect us from disease.

Vegetables and fruits may be eaten cooked or raw and can be prepared in a great variety of ways. They are the original fast food.

All the above nutrients and other substances are beneficial in many ways:

- ⇒ They reduce the risk of certain diseases like
 - ⇒ heart disease
 - ⇒ high blood pressure
 - ⇒ some forms of cancer
- ⇒ Vegetables and fruits are a good source of fluid to keep us hydrated.



Phytochemicals - Substances in plant foods that work with nutrients & fibre to protect us against disease.

Phytochemicals in the Diet

- ⇒ Reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, cataracts, osteoporosis, urinary tract infections, and also slow down the aging process.
- ⇒ Are destroyed by modern processing methods and possibly cooking. So choose fresh rather than processed!
- ⇒ Are found in greatest amounts in vegetables and fruits that have a bright colour, such as yellow, orange, red, green, blue and purple.

Anti-oxidants in the Diet

1. The anti-oxidants are Vitamins A, C, E and selenium.
2. Vitamin A (beta-carotene)
sources: red, yellow and orange fruit and vegetables e.g. carrots, tomatoes, peaches and apricots, as well as green vegetables e.g. broccoli and spinach.
3. Vitamin C sources:
 - ⇒ citrus fruit e.g. oranges, tangerines;
 - ⇒ soft fruit e.g. strawberries;
 - ⇒ bright coloured vegetables e.g. cabbage, broccoli, peppers, tomatoes;
 - ⇒ potatoes, especially new potatoes.
4. Keep our cells healthy and stable.
5. Neutralise free radicals. Free radicals cause cell damage and play a part in cancer, cardiovascular disease and other age-related diseases.





Benefits of vegetables and fruit

Onions and garlic

- ⇒ Lower cholesterol and blood pressure
- ⇒ May reduce risk of certain types of cancers, such as stomach cancer
- ⇒ Have anti-bacterial properties
- ⇒ Protect against heart disease and stroke

Apricots

- ⇒ Protect against heart disease, stroke and cancer

Strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, currants

- ⇒ Protect cells from cancer
- ⇒ Protect the brain as it ages
- ⇒ Lower cholesterol levels
- ⇒ Protect against heart disease

Broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, turnips

- ⇒ Protect against certain forms of cancer
- ⇒ May help to block growth of prostate and breast cancer

Carrots, pumpkin, oranges

- ⇒ May help slow the ageing process
- ⇒ Reduce the risk of certain types of cancer

Spinach, kiwi, dark green leafy vegetables

- ⇒ Improve lung function
- ⇒ Reduce complications linked to diabetes
- ⇒ Maintain proper vision as one ages
- ⇒ Reduce risk of cataracts

Tomatoes, red peppers, watermelon, pink grapefruit

- ⇒ Reduce risk of prostate cancer
- ⇒ Reduce risk of heart disease

Cranberries, celery, eggplant, cherries, apples

- ⇒ Fight heart disease
- ⇒ Slow cancer and tumour growth
- ⇒ Prevent blood clots
- ⇒ Reduce inflammation

Rinds and edible white membrane of citrus fruit

- ⇒ Protect lungs
- ⇒ Reduce cancer risk
- ⇒ Decrease inflammation
- ⇒ Protect against heart disease