

# Be Smart—Take 5!

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**5 OR MORE  
SERVINGS OF  
FRUITS AND  
VEGETABLES EACH  
DAY HELP FIGHT  
CANCER AND  
HEART DISEASE**

Despite the wonderful variety of fruits and vegetables available, most of us don't eat enough of nature's finest gifts. According to the National Cancer Institute, we each average only 3½ servings of fruits and vegetables a day—well below the 5 or more servings recommended by health experts. By attaining this "magic" number daily, you may help protect yourself and your family against heart disease and cancer.

#### DISEASE-FIGHTING POWERHOUSES

It makes no difference what form of produce you choose; whether it is fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, you'll find a colorful array of nutrition-packed produce to serve your family. These are the nutrients found in fruits and vegetables that benefit your health the most:

- Beta-carotene, found in dark green, orange, and yellow produce, may help protect against heart disease, stroke, and some cancers. A study of 22,000 men, which began in 1982, has so far shown that beta-carotene may be a promising component in reducing heart disease risk.

Other studies have shown beta-carotene helped reduce the risk of some cancers. However, a study concluded this year surprisingly showed that beta-carotene supplements did not help prevent lung cancer among heavy smokers. Nevertheless, the cancer institute stresses that a healthful lifestyle, emphasizing fruits and vegetables and not smoking, is essential in cancer prevention.



#### BREAKFAST

Top your cereal with fruit and have a glass of juice to start you on your way.

- Vitamin C, abundant in citrus fruits, green peppers, cabbage, and cantaloupe, may work as an antioxidant to strengthen our built-in defenses against disease. Inadequate vitamin C may curtail the ability of watchdog-like tissues to slow or stop a cancerous tumor's growth. Additionally, a 1993 study suggested that a diet rich in vitamin C may increase HDL, the good cholesterol in the blood, reducing the risk for heart disease.

- Folic acid is important to healthy pregnancies and may act against cancer. Green leafy vegetables, asparagus, lima beans, broccoli, and beets are good sources. All women of child-bearing age need plenty of folic acid before and during pregnancy to help prevent birth defects. A deficiency also appears to be linked to chromosome damage, which may initiate some cancers.

- Insoluble dietary fiber is known for its potential colon cancer preventing properties. It is plentiful in the seeds and peels of fruits and vegetables.

- Soluble dietary fiber, familiar to many in the form of oat bran, is found in apples, citrus fruits, squash, cauliflower, and carrots. As part of a low-fat diet, soluble fiber may help reduce blood cholesterol and heart disease risk.

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