

Sneak in More Colorful Fruits and Vegetables

It is likely that all of us could use more colorful, healthy fruits and veggies in our daily diets. Throughout the year, we need to be *thoughtful* about how to increase the amount, *and variety*, of fruits and vegetables we consume daily. The recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables that each of us should consume each day can be quite daunting, but if you work on “sneaking” colorful antioxidant- and nutrient-rich fruits and veggies into your favorite meals and snacks, you may be surprised at how quickly you can be successful.

Check out some of the suggestions below to “fruit- and veggie-up” your meals and snacks. Work on “sneaking” these into your meals, and those of your loved ones and friends! Let’s all make our homes and communities healthier!

Sneak #1: Fruit- and veggie-up your breakfasts

- Every evening, put a fruit each day next to the coffee pot, eat it the next morning while the coffee is brewing!
- Every evening, set your breakfast place setting: plates, silverware, napkins, **and** fruit so you don’t forget the fruit in the morning!
- Mix raisins, diced apples, dried apricots, berries or mashed banana into your oatmeal, cereal, or yogurt
- Try savory oats (instead of sweet)! Cook plain oats with water and add your choice of steamed or sautéed veggies, season with salt, pepper, or a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese.
- Add chopped peppers, onion, broccoli and/or shredded carrots (fresh, or from your freezer stash: see text box to the right) to the pan when making your morning omelet, scrambled eggs, or breakfast potatoes. (Sauté the veggies a bit before adding to the eggs if you don’t care for crunch!)
- Make a smoothie with frozen fruit of your choice, and skim milk or vanilla soy milk – add greens like kale or spinach to add extra nutrition found these powerhouse foods!



Quick-prep suggestion: Keep chopped peppers of all colors, onions, broccoli, green onions, shredded carrots, etc. in baggies in the freezer – makes it very easy to add colorful, nutritious veggies to almost any dish in a flash!

Sneak #2: Fruit- and veggie-up your lunch and dinner plans

- Go for a veggie-only topped pizza, you may be pleasantly surprised as you experience the wonderful flavors of a no-meat pizza: mushrooms, peppers, onions, pineapple, tomatoes, or any other veggie!
- Make a sweet potato pizza sauce. In a food processor, pulse flesh of one cooked sweet potato, 1 tablespoon oil, red pepper and a pinch of salt until sauce is smooth. Spread onto pizza crust!
- Put slices of cucumber, tomato, onion, and/or lots of lettuce or spinach, on any sandwich

- Add mushrooms, peppers, onions, spinach, diced/shredded carrots, or peas to spaghetti sauce, or soups (these can be from your frozen stash of ready-to-use chopped veggies in the freezer)
- Place a few slices of tomato (and maybe slices of onion and few pieces of spinach!) on a grilled cheese sandwich
- Add vegetables such as celery, onions, carrots, and/or peppers to meatloaf
- Replace the jelly on a peanut butter sandwich with sliced bananas or apples
- Add diced apples, raisins, or grapes to chicken or turkey salad, and serve on a crispy bed of romaine lettuce
- Add layers of thawed (and thoroughly drained/pressed dry) frozen spinach, or slices of eggplant, to lasagna before cooking
- Substitute spaghetti squash “noodles” or spiralized zucchini, for regular pasta noodles, and top with tomato marinara sauce with grated cooked carrots and/or peas
- Puree cooked cauliflower into the consistency of mashed potatoes in your favorite mashed potato recipe
- Use lettuce instead of flour wraps – crisp and lower in calories, higher in nutrition!



Sneak #3: Fruit- and veggie-up your snacks!

- Create a smorgasbord of colorful raw veggies and fruits for a fun snack with your friends and/or family – you choose what to include, but aim for at least 5 different types of plant-based snacks!
- Top a baked potato with salsa and green onions
- Thinly slice a sweet potato, toss with a little olive oil, season as you wish and bake to make sweet potato chips (approximately 20 mins at 400 degrees F; keep an eye on them!)
- Place mandarin oranges, diced pears, sliced strawberries, and/or other fruits in “boats” of romaine lettuce pieces, drizzle with vanilla yogurt
- Carry portable, nonperishable fruits with you while on the go, such as raisins and other dried fruits such as banana chips and dried apricots! Baby carrots, oranges, and apples travel well too!

Sneak #4: Fruit-up your desserts!

- Choose any mixture of fresh or thawed frozen fruit, topped with light cool whip or a drizzle of vanilla low-fat (or Greek nonfat) yogurt
- Enjoy a baked (or microwaved) apple, cored and stuffed with raisins and a sprinkle of cinnamon
- Dip strawberries in dark chocolate (melt the chocolate in a glass dish in the microwave, easy!)
- Half pears and roast them with a drizzle of honey and a sprinkling of ginger (~30 mins at 350 degrees F)
- Make a tropical fruit salad: mix together pieces of pineapple, mango, melons, and halved grapes, with a sprinkle of shredded coconut!



Some text adapted from:

[http://www.ahealthiermichigan.org/2016/07/20/30-ways-to-sneak-in-more-fruits-and-vegetables/;](http://www.ahealthiermichigan.org/2016/07/20/30-ways-to-sneak-in-more-fruits-and-vegetables/)

<https://greatist.com/health/40-unexpected-ways-add-veggies-meal>