

10 Fun and Easy Tips to Eat More Veggies

We all know we should eat more vegetables, but it always seems like such a hassle. Below are ten ways to make getting vegetables in your diet more interesting and even enjoyable.

As a good rule of thumb, choose at least three different colors of vegetables. Making sure you have a variety of colors in your shopping basket will likely mean a variety of textures and flavors, too. Vegetables of different colors contain different amounts of vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. By eating different colors throughout the week, you increase your intake of a wider range of nutrients. See if you can get more than three colors in your basket. Imagine how bright your shopping cart will be!

Learn how to pick out top-notch produce. You will be much more interested in eating your veggies if they look and feel good and fresh. Supermarkets often have a large book in the produce section that lists hundreds of different fruits and vegetables. Take a few minutes to look up the vegetables you are interested in and see what it says about picking out the best pieces. Knowing if something is firm or soft when it is ripe and what to look for on the skin is handy to know and will ensure you have great-tasting produce.

When you get the veggies home, prep them right away. When you are already hungry, the last thing you want to do is spend time washing and cutting up veggies. To help eliminate this roadblock, prep the veggies as soon as you get home from the store. Wash, cut, and store the vegetables in food-safe containers after you have put away the rest of your groceries. Then, when you feel hunger strike you have crunchy, satisfying snacks ready to eat without any hassle. Some vegetables may lose a bit of their nutrients if they are washed and cut and left to sit for a couple of days. I say a few nutrients lost are better than no nutrients at all. If prepping your veggies early gets you to eat more of them, then you are winning.

Add veggies to breakfast. Who said you can only have fruit in the morning? Vegetables are a great way to liven up a savory breakfast. Throw in some spinach, mushrooms, and onions with your scrambled eggs or omelet. More of an oatmeal or toast kind of person? Channel the British and have a roasted tomato as a side to your oatmeal, or even some beans.

Count beans as a veggie instead of a protein. Beans are amazing. They are full of fiber, protein, and nutrients. You don't have to think of beans as just a source of protein—you can think of them as veggies, too! Buy canned beans or make a pot of your own for mere pennies. They make a great side in the morning with breakfast or later that day with dinner.

Make one snack a day a fruit and one a veggie. I like fruit as a snack and I don't want to give it up. Instead, I have been having a vegetable as part of my morning snack and then I look forward to my fruit later in the day. A favorite snack of mine is carrots and celery with hummus.

Roasting Tomatoes

Roast a pound of Roma tomatoes, cut lengthwise and placed cut side up on a baking sheet in a 375 degree oven for one hour. Jazz them up with some garlic, a little bit of olive oil and balsamic vinegar or sprigs of thyme. The tomatoes will keep in a closed container in the refrigerator for five days. Make ahead of time and warm them in the oven or microwave as you cook your oatmeal or wait for your toast to pop up in the morning. If you want a sweeter morning side, roast up some sweetpotatoes instead.

Continued next page

Plan your meals. Save yourself from the stress of figuring out what to eat every day by making a weekly meal plan. Be sure to include lunches and snacks. A plan also makes grocery shopping a breeze.

Start with covering half your plate with fruits and veggies. The USDA MyPlate recommends half your plate be covered with fruits and vegetables. That is a lot of food to eat! A trick I learned when I started meal planning was to plan the fruits and vegetable sides first, and then plan the protein around them, instead of the other way around. Instead of saying, “We are having chicken for dinner, what else should I make?” think “We are having cut up watermelon and grilled asparagus for dinner. Would fish or chicken go better?”

Explore new recipes. Adding more vegetables to your diet is a great excuse to search for new ideas, cookbooks, and to update old family recipes. Have you been eyeing a special cookbook? Use the vegetable section as your excuse to finally pick it up!

Have fun. Incorporating more vegetables into your day doesn't have to feel like a chore. Think of it as a goal or a game with your family and see who gets the most different vegetables in a day. Prep the vegetables from the store together in the kitchen with music playing and enjoy each other's company. Smaller children can help too. They can wash the vegetables or put the cut up veggies into containers for the fridge. Then everyone knows what veggies are available and can help themselves.