



# MyPlate Food Group Focus: Make Half Your Plate Fruits & Vegetables

Eating a variety of vegetables everyday is vital for overall health. Vegetables not only provide nutrients the body needs to maintain optimal health but they also play a role in the prevention of many chronic diseases. Most vegetables are nutrient-dense foods - low in calories and rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytochemicals. MyPlate puts vegetables into 5 subgroups, based on their nutrient content.

**Eat more dark-green veggies like broccoli, spinach, and other dark leafy greens.** Dark-green leafy vegetables are low in calories and provide vitamin A, C, folate, fiber, potassium, magnesium and calcium. MyPlate recommends that most adults eat at least 3 cups of leafy green vegetables each week.

Dark Green Vegetables			
Bok choy	Dark green leafy lettuce	Mustard greens	Swiss chard
Broccoli	Kale	Romaine lettuce	Turnip greens
Collard greens	Mesclun	Spinach	Watercress

**Eat more orange vegetables like carrots and sweet potatoes.** Orange vegetables are good sources of vitamin A, potassium and fiber. MyPlate recommends that most adults at least 2 cups of orange vegetable a week.

Orange Vegetables	
Acorn squash	Hubbard squash
Butternut squash	Pumpkin
Carrots	Sweet potatoes

**Eat more dry beans and peas like pinto beans, kidney beans and lentils.** Dry peas and beans (legumes) are a good source of protein, fiber, minerals and folate. These foods can be used as a vegetable or as a meat alternative. MyPyramid recommends that most adults eat at least 3 cups of dry beans and peas a week.

Dry Beans and Peas			
Black beans	Kidney beans	Navy beans	Split peas
Black-eyed peas	Lentils	Pinto beans	Tofu
Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)	Lima beans	Soy beans	White beans

Starchy vegetables are higher in calories than other vegetables. They are a source of carbohydrates and fiber. Watch your portion size of these vegetables when you include them in your meal plan.

Starchy Vegetables			
Corn	Green peas	Lima beans	Potatoes

Other vegetables vary in their nutrient content and have unique contributions to our diet. Variety is key.

Other Vegetables			
Artichokes	Cauliflower	Iceberg (head) lettuce	Tomato juice
Asparagus	Celery	Mushrooms	Vegetable juice
Bean sprouts	Cucumbers	Okra	Turnips
Beets	Eggplant	Onions	Wax beans
Brussels sprouts	Green beans	Parsnips	Zucchini
Cabbage	Green or red bell peppers	Tomatoes	

## How much do I need to eat everyday?

The total amount of vegetables you need to eat each day depends on your age, sex, and level of physical activity. Recommended daily amounts are shown in the chart.

Age		Daily Recommendation*
		Total Daily
Children	2 to 3 years	1 cup
	4 to 8 years	1 ½ cups
Girls	9 to 13 years	2 cups
	14 to 18 years	2 ½ cups
Boys	9 to 13 years	2 ½ cups
	14 to 18 years	3 cups
Women	19 – 30 years	2 ½ cups
	31 – 50 years	2 ½ cups
	51+ years	2 cups
Men	19 – 30 years	3 cups
	31 – 50 years	3 cups
	51+ years	2 ½ cups

\*Amounts are for those who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity beyond normal daily activities. You may need more grains depending on higher amounts of physical activity. Visit [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) for more information.

## What counts as a cup of vegetables?

In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice or 2 cups of raw leafy greens (like spinach or lettuce in a salad) can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group. Visit [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov) for the equivalents of specific vegetables. For example about 12 baby carrots are equal to 1 cup or one 8” ear of corn is equal to 1 cup.

## Vegetable Group: GO, SLOW, WHOA

An easy way to make smart and nutritious choices within each food group is to use the “Go, Slow, Whoa” concept. **GO** foods are the most “nutrient dense.” **SLOW** foods are higher in calories, fat and sugar than **GO** foods. **WHOA** foods may be high in calories, fat and sugar and offer little nutritional value.

Food Group	GO Eat almost anytime, based on calorie needs	SLOW Eat sometimes, at most several times a week	WHOA Eat only once in a while or on special occasions
Vegetables	Almost all fresh, frozen and canned vegetables without added fat and sauces.	All vegetables with added fat and sauces; oven-baked French fries, avocado.	Fried potatoes like French fries or hash browns, other deep-fried vegetables.

To learn more about “Go, Slow Whoa Foods,” visit <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/live-it/go-slow-whoa.htm>

## Tips to help you eat a variety of vegetables

In general.....

- Choose fresh vegetables in season. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave.
- Look for vegetables that are easy to prepare. Pick up pre-washed bags of spinach, baby carrots and grape tomatoes for a salad in a minute.

In the morning.....

- Scramble eggs with a frozen vegetable medley. Add salsa for a Mexican flare.
- Mix in cooked vegetables like spinach, asparagus tips or broccoli buds into scrambled eggs or fold into an omelet.
- Have a cup of vegetable juice.
- Have a muffin or quick bread made with veggies (see recipe for sweet potato cranberry bread).

For lunch and snacks.....

- Fill your sandwich with fresh vegetables like sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers and onions.
- Pack a bag of crunchy veggies like carrots, celery sticks, sugar snap peas and sweet red pepper slices.
- Add a grated carrot and celery to your tuna or chicken salad.
- Grab a can of tomato or vegetable soup for a quick lunch or snack.
- Toss leftover pasta or rice with veggies and a low-fat vinaigrette for a super salad. Add tuna, diced chicken or beans for protein.
- Enjoy a main dish salad at lunch.
- Order a pizza with extra veggies like mushrooms, green peppers, spinach and onions.
- Bake or microwave a sweet potato. Season with cinnamon if desired.

For dinner.....

- Add a package of broccoli to pasta during the last three minutes of cooking and top with garlic, olive oil and parmesan cheese.
- Plan some meals around a vegetable main dish, such as a vegetable stir-fry or soup.
- Shred carrots or zucchini onto meatloaf, spaghetti sauce and casseroles.
- Super-size your produce portions.
- Roast veggies drizzled with olive oil in a 425 degree oven until tender. Use leftovers for salads or veggie sandwiches.
- Make a fast and healthy shredded carrot salad by adding raisins, lemon juice and a little sugar.
- Add grated carrots, baby peas and sliced green onions to rice, couscous or wheat bulgur.
- Sauté fresh greens with minced garlic over high heat for a few minutes. Season with olive or sesame oil, salt and pepper.
- Add cooked, frozen, chopped kale and parmesan cheese to mashed potatoes.
- Throw some veggies on the grill – try bell peppers, onions and zucchini.



## Vegetable Group Recipes

### Very Veggie Oriental Slaw

2 cups cauliflower florets	1/2 cup white-wine vinegar
1 small, firm green cabbage, shredded	2 Tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 large carrot, shredded	1 Tbsp. dark sesame oil
1/2 green bell pepper, chopped	2 tsp. peeled, grated fresh ginger root
4 radishes, trimmed and thinly sliced	2 garlic cloves, minced
4 scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced	1/4-1/2 tsp. red-pepper flakes
1 Tbsp. toasted sesame seeds	

1. Steam cauliflower until tender-crisp, about 5 minutes. Place vegetables in a large bowl.
2. Place vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, ginger, garlic and red-pepper flakes in a blender and process until smooth. Stir in sesame seeds. Pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss well. *(The slaw can be made up to 24 hours ahead and refrigerated.)*

To toast sesame seeds: Cook sesame seeds in a heavy, dry skillet over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, for 2 to 3 minutes, or until lightly browned. Cool. *Makes 8 servings. Per serving: 67 calories, 3 gm fat, 3 gm protein, 10 gm carbohydrate, 4 gm fiber, 0 mg cholesterol, 71 mg calcium, 1.2 mg iron, 168 mg sodium*

### Veggie Roll-Ups

6 whole wheat tortillas (10 inch)	20 sugar snap peas
3/4 cup light garlic and herb cheese spread*	Fresh spinach leaves (about 12 per roll-up)
1 sweet red bell pepper, seeded and cut into thin strips	

Blanch sugar snap peas in boiling water for 30 seconds. Drain and chill in ice water to stop the cooking process. Drain and pat dry. Spread 2 tablespoons cheese spread over a tortilla. Layer fresh spinach leaves over the bottom half of the tortilla. Place a row of red pepper strips and a row of sugar snap peas across the middle of the tortilla. Roll the tortilla tightly and wrap in plastic wrap. For best results refrigerate 2-3 hours. To serve cut each tortilla into eight 1 inch pieces.

*Makes about 48 appetizers. Per piece: 37 calories, 1 gm protein, 5 gm carbohydrate, 1 gm fat, 3 mg cholesterol, .3 mg iron, 27 mg calcium, 64 mg sodium*

\* You can use our recipe for Herbed Yogurt Cheese or the brand Alouette light found in the deli section.

### Sweet Potato Bread with Cranberries

2 large eggs, slightly beaten	1 tsp. vanilla extract
1-1/3 cup sugar	1-1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/3 cup canola oil	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 cup mashed sweet potatoes, canned or cooked fresh	1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1 cup chopped cranberries	1 teaspoon baking soda

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9 inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray and dust with flour.
2. In a large bowl, combine eggs, sugar, oil, sweet potatoes and vanilla.
3. In a separate bowl, combine flour, cinnamon, allspice, and baking soda. Make a well in the center. Pour the sweet potato mixture into the well. Mix just until moistened. Stir in cranberries.
4. Spoon batter into prepared loaf pan and bake for 1 hour or until a toothpick in the center comes out clean.  
Makes 12 slices

*NUTRITION FACTS Per slice: 222 calories, 3 gm protein, 7 gm fat, 38 gm carb, 1 gm fiber, 35 mg chol, 15 mg calcium, 1 mg iron, 132 mg sodium.*