

## EAT MORE VEGGIES !!

We all know we should be eating more vegetables, but the latest research shows that most American adults still fall short in meeting the recommended 2 1/2 to 3 cups per day (roughly 4 to 6 servings). In fact, only 10% of people meet the recommended daily amount.

So what exactly constitutes a serving?

- 1/2 cup raw or cooked vegetables (zucchini, peas, carrots, etc.)
- 1 cup raw green leafy vegetables (spinach, kale, rainbow chard, etc.)

Here are 10 tips to eat more vegetables:

**1. Eliminate the competition.** Use your plate as a guide and aim to fill half of it with vegetables at every meal. This strategy will leave less room for starchy, calorie-dense sides (rice and pasta, I'm talking to you!) and help ensure that you fill up on nutrient-rich, low-calorie vegetables.

**2. Batch cook vegetables.** Cooking in advance lets you easily add vegetables to meals throughout the week. Add them to salads, side dishes, or even an omelet at breakfast.

(A favorite way to meal prep vegetables in the summer is by throwing them on the grill (no cleanup!). If you have a lot of produce about to go bad, roast it up! Toss it with olive oil, season with salt and pepper, place on a baking sheet and pop it in the oven for 20-30 minutes at 400 degrees Fahrenheit.)

**3. Think beyond bread when building a sandwich.** Try making a wrap with a large, sturdy collard green leaf. Skip the burger bun and instead try two portobello mushroom caps or even two thinly sliced sweet potato rounds baked for 20 minutes until crispy. Butter lettuce and romaine lettuce leaves both make great cups for serving tuna, chicken or egg salads.

**4. Use fresh herbs, lemon, spices and sea salt.** These will elevate the flavors of otherwise bland vegetables like cauliflower, green beans, and summer squash without adding extra calories. Sprinkle veggies with nutritional yeast to give a boost of flavor and B vitamins, which are essential for nutrient metabolism.

**5. Keep sliced cucumbers, bell peppers and carrot sticks on hand.** Enjoy with hummus or yogurt dip when a snack attack strikes. You can also channel your inner kid and slather nut butter on a few celery sticks.

**6. Start your meal with a cup of vegetable soup or a salad.** You'll get in a serving or two of veggies before you have a chance to fill up on the main dish.

**7. Boost your breakfast.** Add fresh salsa, onion relish, or pickled cabbage (kimchee or sauerkraut are also rich in gut-friendly probiotics) to scrambled eggs.

**8. Stock up on frozen vegetables.** Use these to enhance a soup recipe (adding extra veggies rarely alters the recipe), elevate a marinara sauce, or to simply stir-fry with a protein for a quick weeknight meal.

**9. Branch out!** Visit your local farmers market and ask the farmer for suggestions on how to prepare the produce he/she is selling that week. It's actually how I discovered my love for sautéed rainbow chard!

**10. Substitute rice and pasta.** Non-starchy vegetables like grated cauliflower, spiralized zucchini noodles, or spaghetti squash are great stand-ins for rice and pasta. While the flavor won't be identical, you'll spare a ton of calories and simple carbohydrates and benefit from the nutrients and fiber in the vegetables.

(To prepare the cauliflower rice, simply take one head of cauliflower, break into florets and pulse in a food processor until a rice texture is achieved. No food processor? No problem. Simply use a hand grater to transform the florets into rice. Add one tablespoon of oil to a large skillet and sauté the cauliflower rice for 5-10 minutes and serve.)