Fruits and Vegetables: The Original Fast Foods

Fruits and Vegetables are important to a healthy and balanced diet. Fruits and Vegetables are convenient, a handy size and can be eaten fresh. They can also be eaten on the go and can be prepared quickly. Fruits and vegetables provide quick energy without the extra calories. Read on to learn more about fruit and vegetable consumption among children. There are also tips listed below that will help you sneak in more fruits and vegetables in your family’s diet.

More Matters for Children
1. Young children (2 to 8 years) need about 1 to 1½ cups of vegetables a day. Children 9 to 13 years need about 2 to 2½ cups of vegetables a day.
2. Children (2 to 13 years) need about 1 to 1½ cups of fruit a day.
3. The exact amount of fruit and vegetables depends on the number of calories they need, which depends on the age, whether they are male or female and their level of activity.
4. Portion sizes are usually about ½ cup of fruits and vegetables. Very young children may eat less. It is best to let the child decide how much to eat. Offer small amounts and let them ask for more.
5. There are several ways to help children learn to enjoy a variety fruits and vegetables.
6. Let them choose fruits and vegetables when shopping.
   - Let them wash and prepare fruits and vegetables for snacks and meals.
   - Let them serve themselves fruits and vegetables beginning with small amounts at first.
   - Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables so that children are exposed to them. Encourage them to taste if they refuse to eat them. Offer them several times.
   - Prepare them in different ways both cooked and raw. How they like to eat fruit and vegetables is a personal preference.
   - Teach children where fruits and vegetables grow.
   - Eat fruits and vegetables with them.
   - Avoid rewarding your children for eating their vegetables with sweets. This sends the message that sweets are better than vegetables.
   - Learn to use phrases that help your child eat healthy foods.

Tips to Help You Eat More Fruits and Vegetables
✓ At breakfast, top your cereal with bananas or peaches; add blueberries to pancakes; drink 100% orange or grapefruit juice. Or, try a fruit mixed with low-fat or fat-free yogurt.
At lunch, pack a tangerine, banana, or grapes to eat, or choose fruits from a salad bar. Individual containers of fruits like peaches or applesauce are easy and convenient.

At dinner, add crushed pineapple to coleslaw, or include mandarin oranges or grapes in a tossed salad.

Cut-up fruit makes a great snack. Or, try whole fresh berries or grapes.

Dried fruits also make a great snack. They are easy to carry and store well.

Keep a package of dried fruit in your desk or bag. Some fruits that are available dried include apricots, apples, pineapple, bananas, cherries, figs, dates, cranberries, blueberries, prunes (dried plums), and raisins (dried grapes).

As a snack, spread peanut butter on apple slices or top frozen yogurt with berries or slices of kiwi fruit.

Frozen juice bars (100 percent juice) make healthy alternatives to high-fat snacks.

Cut up vegetables and store them in the refrigerator in clear plastic bags or containers so you can see them easily.

Include at least one vegetable at lunch and dinner. Make them different colors.

Use cut-up vegetables for snacks.

Pick out a new vegetable when you go shopping.

Try vegetables separately if you do not like them mixed.

Drink 100 percent vegetable juice.

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For more information on this or other family and consumer sciences related topics, contact Shelly Barnes, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agent for UT Extension in Wilson County. Barnes can be reached at sbarnes@utk.edu or 615-444-9584.