

## Get Your Greens

March is just around the corner. Whether you're Irish or not, there will be plenty of green around for St. Patrick's Day. Please don't eat the shamrocks, but do eat lots of other greenery! The more dark green vegetables you get, the healthier you're likely to be this year and for many more years to come.

Dark green leafy vegetables are one of the 5 sub-groups in the Vegetables food group of the Dietary Guidelines. The recommended amount is 2 ½ cups of vegetables a day for most of us, a little more or less for some people. Not all of that has to be green leafy ones, but they certainly are some of the more nutritious ones.

We are advised to eat at least 3 cups of dark leafy greens each week. If you don't eat any today, get some extra tomorrow. You can eat your vegetables cooked, canned, frozen or raw. Two cups of raw leafy greens counts as 1 cup from the vegetable group. One cup of cooked or frozen vegetables, or 1 cup of vegetable juice, counts as 1 cup of vegetables.

These dark, leafy greens have folic acid, a B vitamin that's important for nervous system development in infants, and for memory and mental sharpness in seniors. They have vitamin C, good for keeping our gums healthy, healing bruises and fighting off colds. Add vitamin A to the list too. It's important for vision and for bone strength.

They also have potassium, a mineral that is very important for managing our blood pressure. The balance of potassium, calcium and sodium controls blood pressure. We usually have too much sodium and too little of the others. Greens often

contain some calcium, but we don't absorb it very well.

The other sub-groups of vegetables include the orange ones (carrots, winter squash), the legumes (dried beans and peas), the starchy ones (potatoes, corn), and the others (zucchini, eggplant). Each group provides different nutrients. They are all important. But dark leafy greens are definitely some of the best. Have some greens today!