

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Fruits and Veggies - More Matters

The title of this article is also the name of the newest campaign to get us all to eat more fruits and vegetables! More does matter! You'll be seeing the new logo in lots of places. With the new Dietary Guidelines and MyPyramid changing the recommendations from a certain number of 'servings' a day to just total cups a day, the 5-A-Day campaign was out of date. Most Americans are so far short of the recommended 3-5 cups a day of fruits and veggies that any little bit more will be a help. And over and over again, research that tries to increase our intake of just one chemical from fruits or vegetables fails to make a difference. But people who regularly eat diets with lots of fruits and veggies have lower risks of illness.

Often people hear that antioxidants are what we need more of, that antioxidants will protect us from cancer, colon problems, cardiovascular problems, even from getting old so fast. It's true that a lot of the newly recognized phytonutrients from fruits and vegetables do act like antioxidants. Several of the most important vitamins and minerals are antioxidants too, especially vitamins A, C and E.

But many people prefer to take a pill, or find it easier to pop a tablet than eat their fruits and veggies to get their vitamins. So of course there have been research studies done to see if taking pills of extra high doses of these antioxidant vitamins will give us the same protection.

A look at almost 50 of the best studies recently came to a surprising conclusion. Taking high doses of vitamins A or E in pills or supplements did not protect anyone,

they did the reverse. All these studies showed a higher risk of dying with antioxidant supplements! High doses of vitamin C has a similar effect but the risks were not nearly as high. But every study that promoted, encouraged or gave people diets with lots of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and with not much salt or fatty meat has found benefits. People on these diets have less need of antioxidants. Their risk of diseases goes down. Sometimes they start getting better from diseases they all ready have. They don't seem to get old as fast.

So eat your fruits and veggies, because more does matter. It does not matter whether you are eating fresh ones, canned ones or frozen ones. They will all give you most of the important ingredients. The more variety, the more benefits you get.

Canning and freezing do break down some of the vitamin C. But one small glass of fruit juice gives you a day's worth of that vitamin. And by the time you cook the fresh vegetables they will be just about equal to the canned or frozen. So if canned are more affordable, or frozen are more convenient for you, use them.

It doesn't matter if you eat all your veggies at one meal or spread them out over three. If you want green peas for breakfast, go right ahead. If you only want to eat vegetables raw with dip for snacks, that's fine too. Stir applesauce or a smashed banana into your oatmeal? Do it! Here are a few other ideas, then a great veggie recipe to try. Add canned beans to your salads. Sprinkle chopped veggies over a quesadilla. Use tomato juice instead of broth as a base for soups. Sprinkle drained fruit cocktail into gelatin or Knox blocks. Be sure to add lettuce and tomato slices to all your sandwiches, even peanut butter! Mix some fresh spinach or romaine lettuce in with the head lettuce for a salad. Add smashed bananas or raisins to waffle or pancake batter.

This salad has the protein, fruit, dairy and veggies for your dinner. Serve with

whole grain bread and you're done. If you can't eat shrimp, use 1 ½ cups of cooked chicken, crab or surimi (imitation crab chunks) instead.

Sun and Sea Chef Salad

2 large ripe tomatoes	2 oranges, peeled
12 oz cooked shrimp, peeled, deveined	1 green bell pepper, sliced thinly
4 cups mixed greens or lettuce	4 oz goat or feta cheese, crumbled (1C)
1/3 C bottled vinaigrette salad dressing	

Core and cut each tomato into 12 slices. Cut oranges into crosswise slices, then cut slices in half. Process 8 tomato slices and 4 orange slices (use the end ones that aren't so pretty) with the vinaigrette in a blender until smooth. Divide the greens onto 4 plates. Divide the remaining tomato and orange slices on the plates, then the shrimp, pepper and cheese. Drizzle with the blended dressing. Serves 4.

Recipe from Simply Florida Cookbook, available at 813-744-5519, ext. 137.

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