

Total Nutrition

Three Simple Changes That Can Improve Your Health

(NAPSA)—A person could spend a lifetime reading about how certain foods may be beneficial to health. Every day new research is published on the finer points of eating well to stay well.

Put down the books and magazines and turn your interest into action. A few simple changes can make a big difference.

1. Eat an extra fruit and an extra vegetable every day. A diet filled with produce is considered helpful to all sorts of health conditions. For example, a recent study looking at the relationship between fruit and vegetable consumption and heart disease, found that for each extra serving of fruits or vegetables a person ate, the risk for heart disease was lowered four percent. The most helpful produce: green leafy vegetables and vitamin C-rich foods such as citrus fruits. Other studies suggest the risk for heart disease could be reduced 20 to 40 percent through a diet filled with fruits and vegetables.

Eating plenty of produce is also linked to a lower risk of cancer. In fact, it's been estimated that diets high in fruits and vegetables (five to 10 servings a day) could prevent at least 20 percent of all cancer incidence. A review of more than 200 studies found that the risk of lung cancer was halved when fruit and vegetable consumption increased from two servings a day to five. Fruits and vegetables seem to have the greatest protective effect against cancers of the mouth, esophagus, lung, stomach, colon and rectum. A diet rich in produce may also boost bone health, cut the risk for cataracts and protect against stroke, high blood pressure and diverticulosis.

2. Drink more nutrient-packed beverages. Many people sip coffee, soda pop or fruit-flavored drinks throughout the day—yet none of these beverages offer much nutritionally. That's a missed opportunity to help your health. Picking a better beverage is an excellent and easy way to get many more vitamins, minerals and other healthful substances into your body. For example, one cup of orange juice gives you double the vitamin C you need in a day plus one-third of the amount of folic acid you should have.

Apricot nectar contains one-third of your vitamin A requirement and tomato juice is a good source of vitamins A, B6, C and folic acid plus iron and potassium.

3. Change from plain grains to whole grains. Whole grains are hot. A review of 12 recent studies showed that regularly eating whole grains as part of a healthful diet could reduce heart disease risk by as much as 26 percent. Forty studies that looked at 20 different types of cancer deemed whole grains a winner too. Regularly eating whole-grain foods as part of a low-fat diet reduced the risk of several types of cancer by 10 to 60 percent. And, whole grains may protect against diabetes. The Iowa Women's Health Study of nearly 90,000 women found that women who ate more than five grams of fiber from whole-grain cereal a day had a 30 percent lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes than women who ate less than 2.5 grams a day. Vitamins B6 and E along with folic acid, several minerals, antioxidants and phytochemicals give whole grains their "power." Experts believe three servings of whole-grain foods a day can make an impact.

A Great Start Toward Total Nutrition—A regular afternoon snack of a whole-grain cereal mixed with raisins or dried apricots, plus a glass of your favorite fruit juice gives you a great jumpstart toward better health. (See Table for other ideas.)

Brought to you by Total cereals, whole grain breakfast cereals with 100% of the daily value of at least 11 vitamins and minerals, including calcium.

Tips for adding in fruits, vegetables and whole grains:

- For a quick breakfast: Toss a handful of grapes or berries into a cup of yogurt. Sprinkle the top with a whole-grain cereal.
- Boost the nutrition in packaged dinners or sidedishes: Add shredded carrots, sliced zucchini, bell peppers or mushrooms to the mix.
- Perk up soups or casseroles: Stir in cooked barley or brown rice.
- Refresh your afternoon drink: Instead of soda pop, combine 1/2 cup of carbonated water with 1/2 cup of your favorite 100-percent fruit juice.

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