



Fruit Facts

Fruit is one of nature's great gifts to be enjoyed. Whether it is a fresh **strawberry**, a crisp **apple**, a juicy **orange**, or a sweet **date**, fruits bring both joy and good health.

In addition to good taste, fruits are packed with antioxidants, phytochemicals, and vital nutrients. People who eat more fruits as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to reduce their risk of developing many of our nation's most serious health problems. **Aim for 3-4 servings daily.** Enjoy the many benefits of eating fruit regularly in your diet. Here are a few facts about fruit that can enrich your life.

Health benefits

- Eating an abundance of fruits may reduce risk for high blood pressure and stroke.
- Fruits help protect against certain cancers, such as mouth, stomach, and colorectal cancer.
- Diets high in fiber, as found in fruits, help reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.
- Eating fruits high in potassium can help reduce the risk of kidney stones and help decrease bone loss.
- Eating foods such as fruits that are tasty but low in calories (instead of desserts and other higher calorie foods) can help lower calorie intake and combat obesity and type 2 diabetes.

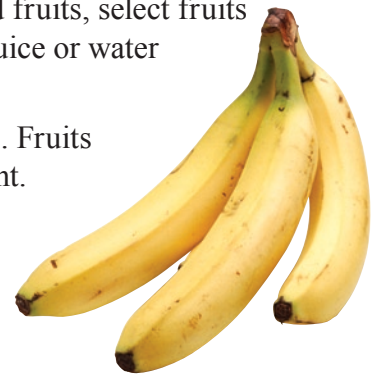


In general

- Keep a bowl of whole fruits on the table, counter, or other readily accessible location.
- Store cut-up fruits in the refrigerator for later use.
- Buy fresh fruits in season when they may be less expensive and at their peak flavor.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or juice) as well as fresh, so that you always have a supply on hand.
- Consider convenience when shopping. Buy pre-cut packages of fruits (such as melon or pineapple chunks) for a healthy snack in seconds. Choose packaged fruits that do not have added sugars.

For the best nutritional value

- Choose whole or cut-up fruits more often than juice, because of the benefits dietary fiber provides.
- Select fruits rich in potassium, such as bananas, prunes and prune juice, dried peaches and apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, and orange juice.
- When choosing canned fruits, select fruits canned in 100% fruit juice or water rather than syrup.
- Vary your fruit choices. Fruits differ in nutrient content.



At meals

- At breakfast, top your cereal with bananas, raisins, 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, 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, strawberries, or grapes in a tossed salad.



At meals (continued)

- Make a Waldorf salad with apples, celery, walnuts, and dressing.
- Try protein dishes that incorporate fruits, such as chicken with apricots or mango chutney.
- Add fruits like pineapple or peaches to kabobs as part of a barbecue.
- For dessert, try baked apples, pears, or a fruit salad.



As snacks

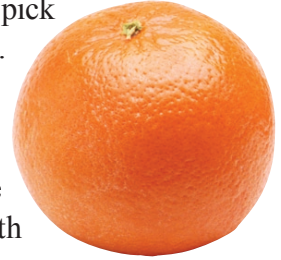
- Cut-up fruits make a great snack. Either cut them yourself, or buy pre-cut packages of fruit pieces like pineapples or melons. Or, try whole, bite-sized fresh berries or grapes.
- Dried fruits also make a great snack. They are easy to carry and store well. Because they are dried, ¼ cup is equivalent to ½ cup of other fruits.
- Keep a package of dried fruit in your desk or car. Some of the 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 (made from 100% juice) make healthy alternatives to high-fat snacks.

Make fruit more appealing

- Many fruits taste great with a dip or dressing. Try low-fat yogurt or pudding as a dip for fruits like strawberries or melons.
- Make a fruit smoothie by blending fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt with fresh or frozen fruits. Try bananas, peaches, strawberries, or other berries.
- Try applesauce as a fat-free substitute for some of the oil when baking.
- Try different textures of fruits. For example, apples are crunchy, bananas are smooth and creamy, and oranges are juicy.
- For fresh fruit salads, mix apples, bananas, or pears with acidic fruits like oranges, pineapple, or lemon juice to keep them from turning brown.

Fruit tips for children

- Set a good example for children by eating fruits every day with meals or as snacks.
- Offer children a choice of fruits for lunch.
- Depending on their age, children can help shop for, clean, peel, or cut up fruits.
- While shopping, allow children to pick out a new fruit to try later at home.
- Garnish plates or serving dishes with fruit slices.
- Top off a bowl of cereal with some berries. Or, make a smiley face with sliced bananas for eyes, raisins for a nose, and an orange slice for a mouth.
- Offer raisins or other dried fruits instead of candy.
- Make fruit kabobs using pineapple chunks, bananas, grapes, and berries.
- Pack a juice box (made from 100% juice) in children's lunches instead of soda or other sugar-sweetened beverages.
- When eating out, choose the fruit side dish option such as sliced apples, mixed fruit cup, or 100% fruit juice.
- Offer fruit pieces and 100% fruit juice to children. There is often little fruit in "fruit-flavored" beverages or chewy fruit snacks.



Keep it safe

- Wash fruits thoroughly before preparing or eating them. Under clean, running water, rub fruits briskly with your hands to remove dirt and surface microorganisms. Dry after washing to remove any remaining residue.
- Keep fruits separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood while shopping for, preparing, or storing these foods.

Source: Adapted from USDA. MyPyramid.gov. Fruits. 2005.
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