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Fill your plate with plants



Vegetables and other plant foods should be top priority in a healthy diet. Vegetables, in particular, are relatively low in 'calories' and fat yet high in fibre, vitamins, minerals, and many other health-boosting properties.

For optimal health, fill at least half your plate with vegetables and some fruit at each meal. Here are some tips to help increase your vegetable consumption:

Add them to the foods you currently eat, like your soups, sandwiches, burgers or omelets. Try different kinds of lettuce or sliced bell peppers in your sandwiches. Have mushrooms and green onions in your omelet.

Experiment with texture. If you hate mushy vegetables, try them raw, shredded, roasted or gently stir-fried instead. If you prefer crunchy foods, make baked kale or beet “chips” in your oven or air-fryer.

Add different flavours. Use a variety of oils, squeeze some lemon, or add a handful of fresh herbs to your vegetables. Sprinkle them with ground flax, sesame seeds or other nuts and seeds. Mix peanut butter with a little olive oil for a runny consistency and drizzle over your steamed or raw veggies.

Add vegetables to breakfast. Spread avocado on toast, have fresh berries on your cereal, perhaps broccoli in your scrambled eggs.

Have salads more often. Just about every restaurant offers some type of salad. At home, use pre-washed greens to speed preparation.

Prepare in advance. Reserve an hour each week to cut carrots, celery and other vegetables. Store them in the refrigerator for quick snacks or convenient meal preparation. Make use of leftovers. Cook extra when you prepare a meal and save in the fridge for your next meal.

Cherry tomatoes, mini cucumbers, and snap peas make great snacks to grab and go. So do apples, bananas, and other fresh fruit.

Frozen vegetables can be just as nutritious as fresh. And they last for some time in the freezer without wilting. Stock up on frozen broccoli, peas, leafy greens and stir-fry mixes.

There are so many different vegetables. Try some that are new to you. Expand your choices.

Eve Lees has been active in the health & fitness industry since 1979. Now retired, she was a Freelance Health Writer for several publications and gave speaking presentations to business and private groups on various health topics. <https://www.artnews-healthnews.com/health-writing>

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