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**10 Ways To Sneak Some Extra Fruits And Vegetables In Your Family's Diet**

**By Susanne Myers**

We all know by now that we should be eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each

day. But knowing and doing are two different things, aren't they? Sometimes it is just not easy to get them all in there. We are constantly tempted to fill up on convenience and junk food. If your family is anything like mine, they'd much rather fill up on a bag of chips or a bowl of rice or pasta instead of trying an apple or a plate of steamed broccoli. So we'll have to get creative. Here are a few ideas to "sneak" some extra vegetables and fruits in your family's diet.

1. Start the day with a breakfast smoothie. All you have to do is throw some fruits, low-fat yogurt and ice in a blender. You may also want to add a scoop of protein powder in there for good measure. Just blend for a few seconds and you have the perfect breakfast ready to go. I like to sip mine in a thermal cup on the way to work. To make it even more appealing for your kids, use some frozen yogurt or a scoop of ice cream in the smoothie. They won't believe that you are letting them have ice cream for breakfast.
2. Dried fruit makes an excellent snack any time of the day. Add some small cartons of raisins to your child's lunch box, pack some yogurt-covered raisins in your husband's briefcase and keep some trail mix sitting around for snacking. You can also add dried fruit to oatmeal and cereal in the morning. My family loves banana chips in their breakfast cereal.
3. Add some fruits and vegetables to your family's sandwiches. You can add some banana, sliced apples or strawberry slices to a peanut butter sandwich. Top a turkey sandwich with lettuce, tomato, cucumber and anything else they will eat. You can even make a sub shop style vegetable sandwich by combining several different vegetables with some mayonnaise and cheese on bread.
4. Have a salad bar at dinner. Set out a variety of chopped vegetables, some cheese and croutons as well as several choices of salad dressing along with the lettuce and let everybody create their own perfect salad.
5. Let them drink their fruits and vegetables. Keep an assortment of fruit and vegetable juices in the fridge and encourage everyone to drink them as a snack. Get creative. You could start "family cocktail

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hour" by pouring everybody a glass of his or her favorite juice over ice. Add some straws, cocktail umbrellas and sit together to talk about how everybody's day went.

6. Try this for dessert. Put a small scoop of ice cream or frozen yogurt in a bowl and top it with lots of fresh or frozen fruit.

7. Offer fruits and vegetables as snacks. You can cut apples into slices and top them with peanut butter or cheese. Cube cheese and serve with grapes. Cut up some fresh veggies and serve them with ranch dip. And of course there's ants on a log. Spread some cream cheese or peanut butter on the inside of a stick of celery and sprinkle raisins on it (wow, fruit and vegetable in one snack).

8. Try some new fruits and vegetables. Pick something exotic to get your family's curiosity. With a little luck their curiosity will outweigh their initial apprehension to trying something new. You could try artichokes, plantains, papaya, mango, star fruit, or anything else you can find in the produce

department of your local store.

9. Make a pot of vegetable soup or a stew that's heavy on veggies and easy on the meat. Both of these make some great comfort food when the weather gets cold.

10. Start "My Veggie Day". Each family member gets to pick a vegetable one day of the week. They qualify to pick a vegetable as long as they tried each vegetable the week before, otherwise they lose a turn and Mom gets to pick.

Incorporate a few of these ideas and you will have everyone in your family eating more fruits and vegetables in no time.

Here is another tip:

Now that everyone in the family has gotten a taste for it, make sure you always have plenty of fresh fruits and veggies available and ready to snack on.

Susanne Myers together with Christine Steendahl, owns and publishes the Healthy Menu Mailer. Each week, we provide you with 7 dinner recipes. Sign up for a free sample menu at

<http://www.healthymenumailer.com/sample-newsletter-signup.html>

### **Eat a variety of veggies for a healthier you**

**By Ronald Goodpaster**

The new food guidelines issued by the United States government recommend that all Americans eat between five and nine servings of fruits and vegetables each and every day. When you first hear that number, it may seem like a lot, but it is actually much easier than you think to fit that many servings of

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fruits and vegetables into your daily diet. For one thing, the shelves of the grocery stores are fairly bursting with fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition, vegetables and fruits are some of the least expensive, most nutrient rich, foods in the supermarket. With all these fruits and vegetables to choose from, it is very easy to make these nutritious, delicious foods part of your daily meals and snacks.

When you take into account how much a serving really is, it is actually quite easy to get five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables per day. For instance, the recommended daily amount actually equates to a quite reasonable two cups of fruit and two and a half cups of vegetables every day. When you consider how many fruits and vegetables are available, and how low the prices usually are, it is easy to see how easy to reach this daily goal really is.

One great way to get the nutrients you need from fruits and vegetables every day is to take full advantage of the variety of these foods available. Eating the same thing every day quickly becomes boring, so why not pick a variety of fruits and vegetables, in every color of the rainbow and in every conceivable shape, size and texture, to give yourself a varied diet every day.

When shopping for fruits and vegetables, it is important to choose a variety of different colors. This is for more than purely artistic reasons. Different color fruits and vegetables have different types of nutrients, and choosing a variety of colors will help ensure you get all the vitamins and minerals you need each and every day.

Finding new recipes is another great way to ensure you get those five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Everyone likes to try out new recipes, and these new recipes may just provide the impetus you need to eat all those fruits and veggies.

New recipes can also provide you the important opportunity to try out some fruits and vegetables you have never tried before. For instance, everyone has eaten oranges, but have you tried kiwi fruit or mangoes? How about spinach or kale? Trying new things is a great way to find new favorites while getting the best nutrition available.

Many people mistakenly think that they do not need to eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables every day if they just take a vitamin supplement. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. That is because fruits and vegetables contain far more than the micronutrients identified by science and synthesized in vitamin pills. While these micronutrients, such as vitamin C, vitamin A and vitamin E are important to good health, so too are the hundreds of other elements that are contained in healthy foods like fruits and vegetables. These elements are not available in any pill, they must be ingested through a healthy, balanced diet that contains plenty of fruits and vegetables.

In addition, fruits and vegetables are much less costly than vitamin pills. Fruits and vegetables are very inexpensive, especially when purchased in season and grown locally. In the long run, getting the nutrition you need from the food you eat is much less expensive, and much better for you, than

popping those vitamin pills every day.

So don't forget to get your five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables every day. It may seem like a

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lot, but you can meet this quite reasonable goal simply by including fruits and vegetables as snacks, as garnishes, as side dishes and as meals.

Ron Goodpaster is a freelance writer, an entrepreneur and a self-proclaimed health nut. He has written many health related and weight-loss articles. He is the webmaster at

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