

## National Fruits & Vegetables Month

September is National Fruits & Vegetables Month, which is an opportunity to bring attention to the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables. This year's theme, *Every Time You Eat, Have A Plant*, explores how to celebrate fruits and veggies throughout the consumers' consumption journey. While shopping, dining out, enjoying a meal with family, snacking, hosting, or brunching, "Every Time You Eat, Have A Plant."

According to a study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most American adults are not getting enough of their fruits and vegetables. Did you know that only 10% of American adults eat enough vegetables and only 12% consume enough fruit? The foods that we eat have a direct impact on our overall health.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that the number of daily servings of fruits and vegetables should be determined by one's sex, age, and physical activity level. Generally, an adult should consume 3-1/2 to 6-1/2 cups of fruits and vegetables. A healthier diet, which includes more fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, and whole grains, is essential in reducing our overwhelming obesity rates.

Here is a look at the 2017-2021 Wyoming Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) for fruit and vegetable consumption. Wyoming adults report consuming fruits and vegetables less than five times per day for these area counties: Campbell 91%; Crook 90%; Niobrara 86%; Weston 90%, and overall, Wyoming is at 90%. So, why are Wyomingites not eating more fruits and vegetables? Two possible barriers include the increasing cost of food and limited access to fruits and vegetables.

Research proves fruits and vegetables are critical to promoting good health. Fruits and vegetables should be the foundation of a healthy diet. Most people need to double the amount of fruits and vegetables they eat every day. Each fruit and vegetable has a different complement of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals. Phytochemicals are natural plant compounds that have many health benefits and provide many bright colors in fruits and vegetables. In addition, most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in calories, fat, and sodium. These delicious foods may lower the risk of some chronic diseases.

Whether you shop at a market or grow fruits and vegetables at home, enjoy any combination of these delectable delights. A plate of colorful food with fruits and vegetables appeals to the eye and the body. Fill at least half your plate with fruits and veggies. The best part is that all produce counts; this means canned, fresh, and frozen varieties can help you reach your goal. When buying canned, dried, or frozen vegetables and fruit, check food labels and choose the products with the lowest sodium and added sugars.

Increase your vegetable and fruit intake with these tips:

- Eat melon, citrus fruit, or other fruit for breakfast.
- Include chopped vegetables with eggs or potatoes.
- Pack portable, easy-to-eat fruits and vegetables for work or school.

- Replace chips or fries with a piece of fruit, fruit cup, side salad, or raw vegetable sticks.
- Add extra vegetables to soups, stews, and sauces.
- Place chopped vegetables in beans, pasta, and rice dishes.
- Fill in a sandwich with fruits and/or vegetables.

Fruits and vegetables are essential to maintaining a healthy and balanced diet. If you are already eating plenty of fruits and vegetables every day, you may be ready for the next step: add more color. Now is the perfect time to incorporate a variety of fresh produce into your daily routine.

(Sources: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov); [www.dietaryguidelines.gov](http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov); [health.gov](http://health.gov); [health.wyo.gov](http://health.wyo.gov); [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov))