



The Healthy Kids Community Challenge

The Healthy Kids Community Challenge is all about helping Ontario kids make healthy choices. Our community is one of 45 across the province chosen to be a part of this special project. That means new ideas and programs are coming to our community – things that make it easier for kids to be active and eat healthier. These are the keys to good health as our children grow up and become adults.

Choose to boost veggies and fruit.

Over the next several months, our Healthy Kids Community Challenge community will be working to encourage kids and families to reach for more vegetables and fruit. Canada's Food Guide recommends children aged 2-13 years old eat 4-6 servings of veggies and fruit each day. However, we know kids and adults often fall short of this goal.

Recommended Number of Food Guide Servings per Day ¹			
Age in Years	2-3	4-8	9-13
Number of Vegetable and Fruit Servings	4	5	6

What's a serving?

People may understand that vegetables and fruit are a healthy choice. But many do not know what a serving looks like. Canada's Food Guide offers these examples of serving sizes for common vegetables and fruit².

One serving of vegetables can include:

- 125 mL, (½ cup) or 1 ear of corn
- 125 mL, (½ cup) or 4 florets of cauliflower or broccoli
- 125 mL, (½ cup) or 1 large carrot
- 125 mL, (½ cup) or 6 spears of asparagus
- 125 mL, (½ cup) of cooked fresh, frozen or canned vegetables such as beans, carrots, okra, bitter melon, bok choy or squash
- 250 mL, (1 cup) of raw leafy greens such as lettuce, kale, or spinach
- 125 mL, (½ cup) of tomato, or tomato sauce

One serving of fruit can include:

- 1 medium apple, orange, peach, pear or banana
- 20 cherries or grapes
- 125 mL, (½ cup) of fresh or frozen berries, melon, mango or plantain





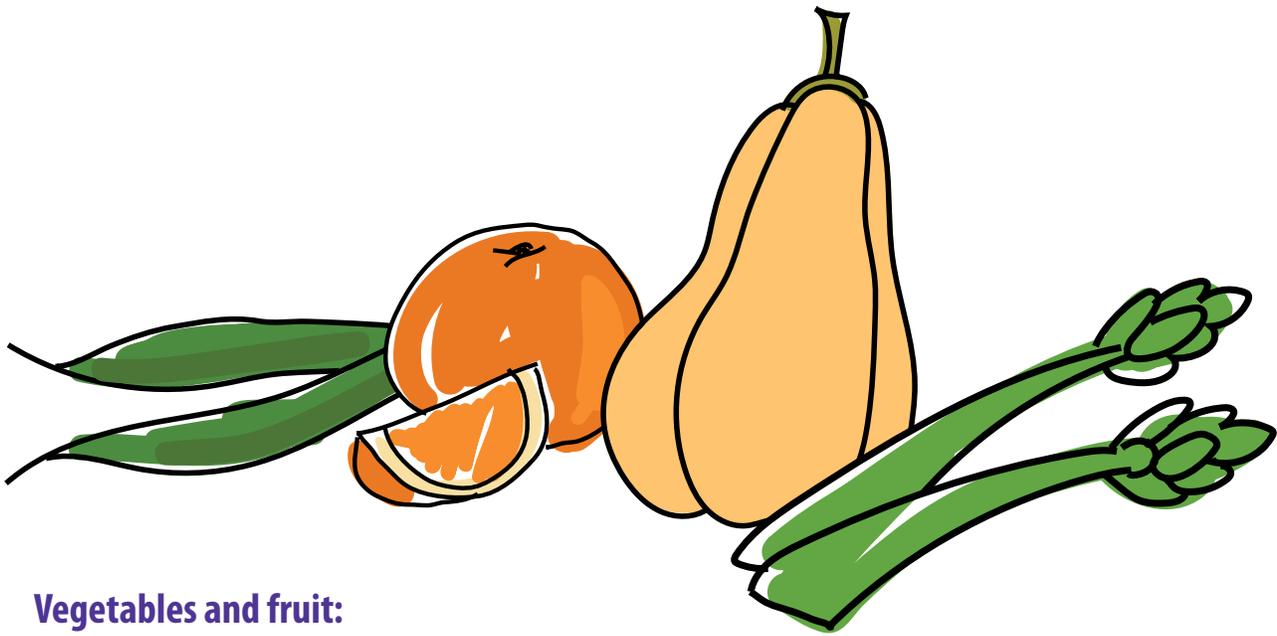
Why should we choose to boost veggies and fruit?

- Vegetables and fruit contain many nutrients that protect our health and fuel our bodies³. Nutrients provided by vegetables and fruit include carbohydrates, vitamins A and C, potassium, magnesium and some B vitamins such as folate⁴.
- Eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruit may reduce the risk of certain types of cancer⁵ and heart disease⁶. This type of diet is also linked to healthy weights.



Canada's Food Guide recommends that children:

1. Eat a mix of different vegetables and fruit each day. Kids should eat at least one dark green (like broccoli, romaine lettuce, green peas and spinach) and one orange vegetable (like sweet potatoes, carrots and winter squash) each day.
2. Choose vegetables and fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt. Vegetables that are steamed, baked or stir-fried are better choices than deep fried⁷.
3. Have whole vegetables and fruit more often than juice⁸. Fruit juice contains as much sugar (though from naturally occurring fruit sugars rather than added sugar) and calories as soft drinks⁹.



Vegetables and fruit: Both are important!

Vegetables and fruit both contain important nutrients for children's growing bodies. Both are grouped together in the Food Guide. Yet different types of vegetables and fruit contain different kinds and amounts of vitamins, minerals and fibre.

- Choosing dark green and orange vegetables and fruits more often can help increase your intake of iron¹⁰ as well as folate and vitamin A¹¹. Salad greens, kale and spinach are also rich in vitamins C, E and K, and broccoli and bok choy are also rich in many of the B-Vitamins. These vegetables also contain an abundance of carotenoids-antioxidants that protect cells and play roles in blocking the early stages of cancer, as well as having high levels of fibre, iron, magnesium, potassium and calcium.
- Furthermore, greens have very little carbohydrates, sodium and cholesterol. The dark greens supply a significant amount of folate, a B vitamin that promotes heart health and helps prevent certain birth defects¹².

- Vitamin A helps maintain normal vision and keeps your skin, eyes and immune system healthy. It also promotes normal growth and development. You get vitamin A from plant foods. Plant foods contain carotenoids which is a form of vitamin A. Carotenoids are found in dark green, yellow, orange and red vegetables and fruit¹³. Vitamin C is important for your health. It plays many roles in the body, including:
 - ~ Helping the body absorb iron;
 - ~ Helping the body heal wounds;
 - ~ Acts as an antioxidant¹⁴;
 - ~ Protects cells from damage and thereby may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and some cancers¹⁵.

Therefore, we need to ensure kids eat a mix of both vegetables and fruit of many different colours.

Fresh, frozen, canned or dried?

Frozen and canned vegetables are generally as nutritious as fresh. They can be an affordable way to get the recommended daily servings.

Dried fruit is a nutritious choice. Look for varieties with no added sugar and salt. A food guide serving of dried fruit is 60 mL, (¼ cup).

Look for frozen, canned and dried vegetables or fruit without any added salt or sugar.

How can families choose to boost veggies and fruit at home?

- Expose children to a mix of different vegetables and fruit when they are young. Research shows that kids who eat veggies and fruit as toddlers are much more likely to do so later in childhood¹⁶.
- Children learn about food by watching others. Research shows that children are more likely to meet recommended vegetable and fruit intake when they see parents and other role models eating these foods often^{17,18}.
- Plan meals around vegetables.
- Kids are more likely to eat veggies and fruits when these foods are made available and accessible to them at home¹⁹.
- Think vegetables and fruit at snack time. Have 'grab and go' veggies and fruit ready for snacks. When Ontario parents serve raw vegetables and fruit as snacks to their children between meals, those children were almost 5 times more likely to meet recommended guidelines²⁰.
- Studies with Ontario parents show that when families eat meals together, away for the TV, children are 67% more likely to eat the recommended servings of vegetables and fruit²¹.
- Get kids involved in meal planning and preparation. Children who help prepare meals at home tend to eat more vegetables and fruit. These children were also better at choosing and eating healthy foods for themselves²².
- Think about starting a garden or getting involved in a community garden. Research shows that kids who grow their own veggies and fruit are more likely to taste and eat these foods²³.

Let's get started!

All kinds of groups will be joining forces in our community to support the **Choose to boost veggies and fruit** theme. There will be new actions, programs, policies, and campaigns aimed at making vegetables and fruit the easy choice for a meal or snack, in all the places kids spend time.

Let's encourage our kids to eat more veggies and fruit!

To learn more about the activities in our community or to get involved, contact your Healthy Kids Community Challenge project manager:

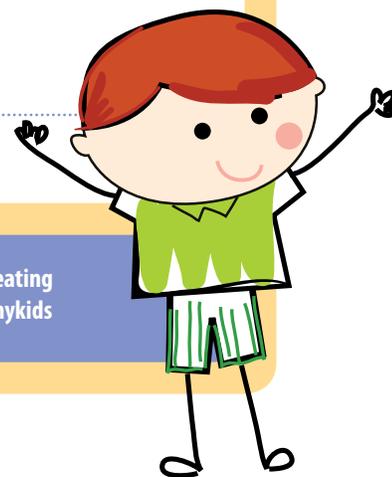
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Learn more about healthy eating for kids at Ontario.ca/healthykids



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- 9 Harvard School of Public Health. Sugary Drinks. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-drinks/sugary-drinks/>
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