

Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits every day

Vegetables and fruits are foods that we should eat every day. They have lots of nutrients (especially vitamins and minerals) that are good for our health. Vegetables and fruit also add colour and variety to our meals. Unfortunately, most South Africans do not eat enough vegetables and fruit and therefore do not get all the vitamins and minerals they need.

Why should we eat plenty of vegetables and fruit?

Vegetables and fruit are important to

- Help our eyesight
- Help our bodies to fight against illnesses like colds, diarrhoea and tuberculosis.
- Help our bowels to work properly (going to the toilet easily).
- Help to protect our bodies against illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer.



What does 'plenty' mean?

Plenty means that you should eat at least 5 portions of vegetables and fruits every day. For example:

- Eat a fruit with breakfast.
- Add raw vegetables such as carrots or shredded cabbage to your lunch. You can also eat a fresh fruit or fresh vegetables as a snack in between meals.
- Eat a yellow vegetable (carrots, pumpkin, squash) and a green vegetable (wild spinach, spinach, cabbage, green beans) with your main meal of the day.
- Eat a fruit instead of a pudding after dinner .

What do the words mean?

Nutrients

Something that provides nourishment.

Minerals

Nutrients which our bodies need to work properly.

Vitamins

Nutrients that are found in foods and which protect our bodies

Try this to eat more vegetables and fruits

- Double your normal serving of vegetables
- Add extra vegetables to salads, soups, stir-fries, stews and curries.
- Eat a vegetarian meal (without meat) at least once a week
- Add vegetables to egg dishes (scrambled eggs or omelet).
- You can cook most vegetables in just a few minutes if you boil, steam, stir-fry or microwave them.
- Get children into the habit of eating fruit when they are hungry between meals.



All photos by UNICEF/Giacomo Pirozzi

Eat healthy for less

To eat plenty of vegetables and fruits every day costs money. You can be wise and

- Buy vegetables and fruit that grow in your area. They are cheaper.
- Buy more vegetables if they are cheaper than fruit.
- Buy fresh vegetables and fruit as they are the healthiest and cheapest.
- Buy wisely. If fresh fruit is very ripe, buy only enough to use right away.
- Buy vegetables and fruit which are in season - they are cheaper.
- Collect and use wild traditional vegetables and fruit.
- Remember to always wash fresh vegetables and fruit before using.



Grow your own vegetables and fruit



If you have a yard and enough water, make your own vegetable garden.

Loosen the soil and work in old leaves and compost. You can start your own compost heap - dig a trench and gradually fill it with raw peels, skins, bones and other green leftovers.

Seed is not very expensive and can give you lots of vegetables at little cost.

Follow the instructions on the seed packages. Don't sow everything at once. Sow with one or two week intervals. This way you will have fresh vegetables all the time.

Many plants produce their own seeds. Harvest the seed and sow again.

Plant some fruit trees if you have the space.

Water well in the early stages of growing.

If you don't have a yard, you can try to grow vegetables and herbs in pots or black bags.

Mix your vegetables and fruit with starchy foods and dry beans, split peas, lentils, chicken, fish, meat or eggs. Remember to eat a variety of foods.



For more information, contact:

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How much do you know?

- What does the word plenty mean to you?
- Which fruits do you and your family usually eat?
- Which vegetables do you and your family eat often?
- Why is it important to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables every day?