



A nutrition Fact Sheet



Dark Green, Red, and Orange Vegetables

Even though a healthy diet consists of fruits and vegetables of all colors, one of the key recommendations of the 2010 USDA Dietary Guidelines specifically mentions eating a variety of dark green, red, and orange vegetables. MyPlate guidelines suggest eating 1½ to 2 cups of dark green vegetables and 4 to 6 cups of red and orange vegetables each week.

Why should we eat dark green vegetables?

Dark green vegetables are rich in vitamins A, C, and K, and folate. These nutrients protect bones, decrease inflammation, help with vision, improve immunity, and protect against some types of cancers. Some of these vegetables are good sources of vitamin E, which is also important for immune health and protection against heart disease.

What are some examples of dark green vegetables?

- bok choy
- broccoli
- collard greens
- dark green leafy lettuce
- kale
- mustard greens
- romaine lettuce
- spinach
- turnip greens
- watercress

What is a ½ cup serving of dark green vegetables according to MyPlate?

- 1 cup uncooked leafy vegetables
- ½ cup cooked greens
- ½ cup broccoli

Why should we eat red and orange vegetables?

Red and orange vegetables are high in beta-carotene, which the body turns into Vitamin A. Vitamin A helps protect against infection and some types of cancer. Many of these vegetables also have high levels of vitamin C, potassium, and vitamin K. Vitamin C promotes healing, potassium can lower blood pressure, and vitamin K helps with blood clotting.

What are some examples of red and orange vegetables?

- acorn squash
- butternut squash
- carrots
- hubbard squash
- pumpkin
- red peppers
- sweet potatoes
- tomatoes

What is a ½ cup serving of red and orange vegetables according to MyPlate?

- ½ cup mashed acorn squash, butternut squash, hubbard squash, or pumpkin
- 6 baby carrots or 1 medium carrot
- ½ of a large red pepper
- ½ of a large sweet potato
- ½ of a large tomato

How can we add more dark green vegetables to our diet?

- **Green smoothies:** Toss a handful of spinach into fruit smoothies.
- **Salads:** Chop greens like kale into fine strips and mix them with other greens. Or try a massaged kale salad. Massage a small amount of oil into raw kale for three minutes, until the kale softens. Toss with lemon juice and parmesan cheese.
- **Steam:** When cooking green vegetables, cook for just a short time, until the greens are tender and bright green.
- **Kale chips:** Remove the kale stems and tear the leaves into small pieces. Wash and thoroughly dry the leaves. Massage in ½ Tablespoon of oil. Spread in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake at 350°F for 10-12 minutes, until the edges are brown.
- **Stir fries:** Add some broccoli or chopped or torn greens to stir fry recipes.
- **Soups:** Add chopped or torn greens just before serving and cook just until bright green.
- **Pasta:** Toss chopped or torn greens with the cooked pasta and hot sauce to wilt the greens.
- **Grains and beans:** Mix chopped or torn greens into hot grains or beans.



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How can we add more red and orange vegetables to our diet?

- **Raw:** Carrots, tomatoes, and red peppers are delicious raw. Eat them in salads, sandwiches, or with a lowfat dip. Keep ready-to-eat vegetables in your refrigerator.
- **Roasted:** Cube acorn squash, butternut squash, hubbard squash, pumpkin, or sweet potatoes, toss with a little olive oil, and roast at 400°F for about 25 to 30 minutes.
- **Burritos:** Lightly cook red pepper slices and add to burritos.
- **Baked:** Substitute sweet potatoes for traditional baked potatoes or fries.
- **Omelets:** Stuff omelets with vegetables like carrots, red peppers, and tomatoes.
- **Stir fries:** Try carrots, red peppers, or even squash in stir fry recipes.
- **Other main dishes:** Add grated, shredded, chopped, or pureed carrots, red peppers, tomatoes, or squash to lasagna, meatloaf, mashed potatoes, pasta sauce, soups, stews, casseroles, and rice dishes.

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