

This newsletter looks at your fruit and vegetable consumption and to make a conscious effort to boost it. I have highlighted some of the main points from the NHS website www.5aday.nhs.uk, and so if you want further information this is a good place to start.

Fruit and vegetables are key to a healthier lifestyle. What's more, they taste great and add variety to any meal.

Eating 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day may help reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers – the two main killer diseases in this country.

Eating a variety of fruit and vegetables will give you plenty of vitamins and minerals. They are also a good source of fibre and other substances such as antioxidants, all of which are important for your health. Fruit and vegetables are generally low fat, low calorie foods, so eating fruit and vegetables instead of foods that are high in fat and added sugar may help you achieve or keep to a healthy weight.

What counts? Fresh, frozen, chilled, canned, 100% juice, and dried fruit and vegetables all count. The fruit and vegetables contained in convenience foods – such as ready meals, soups and puddings – can all contribute to 5 A DAY.

But convenience foods can also be high in added salt, sugar or fat – which should only be eaten in moderation – so it's important always to check the nutrition information on food labels.

How much is a portion? A portion is a typical serving or helping of fruit or vegetables, for example, an apple, a banana, three heaped tablespoons of frozen peas or canned chickpeas, or a glass of fruit juice. The portion size may be proportionately smaller for children, but they can still aim for at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day. Potatoes, yams, cassava and plantain don't count towards 5 A DAY

as they are starchy foods and different from other fruits and vegetables.

Fruit juice and pulses only count once a day, no matter how much you drink or eat, as they don't have the same mix of fibre and nutrients. To get the maximum benefits, you need to eat different types of fruit and vegetables.

Below are some top tips to help you get those 5 portions a day

Top tips

Everyone loves corn on the cob! Buy a pack of mini ones, freeze them and cook them

Peppers, mushrooms, onions or pineapple on your pizza topping count as 1 portion

Liven up soups and sauces with a handful of kidney beans, peas or corn

Ditch the crisps! Chop up sticks of celery, cucumber and sweet pepper and dip them into salsa or guacamole

Add some crunch to your sandwiches with lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber or grated carrots

Stir in a handful of fresh or frozen vegetables into pasta, soup or noodles

Chop up lots of vegetables and use them in a stir-fry. Quick, easy and super healthy

Swap chocolate for apples. They're just as sweet and much better for your teeth

Eat a piece of fruit or a glass of juice every day for a refreshing start to the day

Open a tin of fruit in natural juice for an instant healthy pudding

Don't throw away over ripe fruit - use it to make yourself a delicious Smoothie

For extra sweetness, chop fruit onto your cereal or stir it into desserts

Wash down lunch with a glass of orange juice - a medium glass counts as 1 portion

Make ice-lollies by pouring fruit smoothies, 100% fruit juice or pureed fresh fruit into ice lolly moulds and freezing them.