

Eat a **Rainbow** Everyday

March is National Nutrition Month. The campaign, designed by the American Dietetic Association focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. This year the focus is on including a variety of fruits and vegetables into your diet.

Fruits and vegetables provide many nutrients that are important in maintaining a healthy body. Most vegetables are low in calories, contain little to no fat, and no cholesterol. (Sauces can add fat and calories.) They are rich in potassium, fiber, folic acid, and multiple vitamins including A, E, and C. Potassium has been linked to maintaining healthy blood pressure. Fiber is important for proper bowel function and decreases the possibility of constipation and diverticulosis. Vitamin A keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps protect against infection. Vitamin E helps protect vitamin A and essential fatty acids from cell oxidation. Vitamin C helps in healing bruises and oral health. It also aids in iron absorption.

Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables has been linked to a variety of health benefits. People who eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables have a lower risk for stroke and perhaps other cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes. Vegetables and fruits may help protect against certain cancers, such as mouth, stomach, and colon-rectum cancer. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables can lead to lower calorie consumption, which can reduce the number on the scale, which has been linked to multiple health benefits.

Try to incorporate fruits and vegetables into each snack and meal. Try making a meal where they are the main ingredient like a salad or stir-fry. Add chopped or pureed vegetables to sauces, gravies, meatloaves, or muffins. Fresh produce makes a great quick and healthy snack. Let vegetables add a little color to your day!

