

Easy Ways to Boost Your Nutrition...and Health!

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Making nutritional lifestyle changes can be challenging for many people. Clients and patients will often tell me that it is hard for them to “fit in” the amount of fruits, vegetables and other nutrients they need into their diets. They seem to understand the value to their health but find it difficult to put that knowledge into action. Here are some tips for easily boosting your nutritional health:

- Eat a rainbow! Choose fruits and vegetables that are brightly colored. The more colorful the produce, the more nutrients you get. For example:
 - Choose ruby-red grapefruit versus white grapefruit and get almost 50 times more beta-carotene and 1,700 times more lycopene – a substance that has been linked to heart-disease prevention in women and prostate protection in men.
 - Deep-red Bing cherries contain double the amount of folate and 21 times more beta-carotene than the paler kind.
 - Lettuce: Cup for cup, romaine’s darker leaves have nearly 4 times more vitamin K and folate, 7 times more lutein and 8 times more vitamin C than pale-green iceberg.
 - Peppers: Green bell peppers will eventually change color with maturity. Red and yellow peppers are simply mature green peppers. That maturity pays off because a medium-sized red pepper has twice as much vitamin C, 4 times more vitamin E and 8 times more beta-carotene than a green pepper the same size.
- Add nutritional oomph and flavor to marinara sauce by shredding a small zucchini into it or puree thawed, frozen mixed vegetables into the sauce. No one will know they’re doubling up on their veggies!
- Meat loaf is a perfect place to “hide” veggies or beans to cut fat and increase fiber. Puree some thawed, frozen mixed veggies into the tomato sauce, add it to the beef and voila! – a nutritional bonus. Or, substitute 1-cup black or pinto beans (mashed) into the ground beef and you’ll add 12 grams of fiber and subtract some of the “bad” saturated fat per serving.
- Try thickening creamy sauces or soups with silken tofu. Just puree, add to the liquid and you’ll boost your calcium intake and add 4 grams of lean protein too.
- Add fresh fruit to plain yogurt to add vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants. If it’s not sweet enough, stir in a tablespoon of all-fruit jam.
- Add chopped nuts to hot and cold cereals, salads, casseroles, or stir-frys to add heart-healthy fats.
- Want to increase your calcium intake and help out your bones? Add 1 tablespoon of nonfat dry milk powder into puddings, smoothies, milk shakes or yogurt to add 100 mg of calcium.
- Stir in ground flaxseed into toppings for fruit crisps or add to recipes that call for breadcrumbs. Ground flaxseed is rich in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.
- Add avocado slices to sandwiches and salads. Avocados contain cholesterol-lowering substances and will help your body absorb other antioxidants in the meal.

Remember – we are entering one of the most bountiful seasons of the year. God is providing us with some of His finest fruits and vegetables. Take advantage of the season, boost your health and enjoy the harvest!