

NUTRITION NEWS

For Parents and Teachers of Elementary School Children

ALL ABOUT VEGGIES

Vegetables are an important part of our diet at any age, but especially for children. People who eat more fruits and vegetables show a reduced risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, as well as certain cancers. In this spring newsletter, we'll be giving you information on why vegetables are important, as well as some tips and tricks on how to increase the number of vegetables your family eats each day.

Vegetable Varieties

Based on their nutrients, vegetables are organized into 5 subgroups: dark green; red and orange; beans, peas, and lentils; starchy; and other vegetables.

- Dark green vegetables include broccoli, dark leafy greens (kale, arugula, romaine), and herbs such as basil and cilantro. These contain antioxidants that help protect cells.
- Red and orange vegetables like bell peppers, carrots, sweet potatoes, and squash contain nutrients that help maintain eye health.
- Beans, peas, and lentils are also considered vegetables. Some popular beans are white, kidney, black, soy, and garbanzo beans. Red and green lentils, as well as split peas, are popular options as well. These contain large amounts of fiber, a nutrient that most Americans (93%, to be exact!) do not get enough of.
- Starchy vegetables include potatoes, corn, and peas. These can be good sources of important vitamins such as C and B.
- Other vegetables are all those that do not fit in one of the categories above. Vegetables such as cauliflower, zucchini, mushrooms, and onions are some examples.



Tips on how to include more vegetables in your family's meals:



- **Eat the Rainbow!**
 - Aim to see at least three different colors on your plate each meal.
- **Plan and shop together.**
 - Children are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables when they help choose what will be served.
- **Get the whole family involved in preparing meals.**
 - Including everyone in prepping and cooking teaches valuable skills and also encourages everyone, especially children, to eat what they helped prepare.
 - Try different cooking techniques to see what everyone likes best. Cooking can make some vegetables taste stronger while mellowing the flavor of others.

Start a Vegetable Garden

Another way to increase the vegetables your family eats is by planting a vegetable garden in your backyard or an herb garden by a windowsill.

- Gardening is a strong educational tool for children. They learn where their food comes from and how it is grown. They learn from every step: selecting the seeds, planting, watering, weeding, and harvesting.
- Vegetables grown in gardens may also have more flavor and nutrition than store-bought vegetables. Many store-bought vegetables are picked before they are ripe so they don't go bad.
- Having a vegetable garden also encourages children and adults alike to practice eating seasonally, which is good for the environment and our health. For example, strawberries always taste better in the spring and mandarins are best in the fall.
- If space is an issue, many plants grow very well in containers. For helpful tips on container gardening see the **Container Garden Guide**.



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**Calfresh Healthy Living, UCCE
Placer/Nevada Counties**

11477 E Avenue
DeWitt Center
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 889-7350

Website:

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/letseathealthy/>



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Agriculture and Natural Resources