Vegetables, Fruits, Whole Grains, and Beans

Session 2
Background Information
Tips
Goals
Why Are Vegetables and Fruits Important?

Eating plenty of vegetables and fruits is a very important part of improving your heart health!

Vegetables and fruits:
- Have lots of good vitamins and minerals.
- Have fiber, which is good for you.
- Make good snacks and desserts.
- Help you feel full.

How Many Vegetables and Fruits Should I Eat?

Most experts recommend at least seven servings of vegetables and fruits every day. In general, a half cup of a cooked vegetable or one cup of a raw vegetable is a serving. For fruit, a small apple or half of a banana is a serving.

It is important to know that you should eat:
- Both vegetables and fruits.
- Many types of vegetables and fruits.

This is because different vegetables and fruits contain different nutrients your body needs to stay healthy.

What Types of Vegetables Should I Eat?

Dark-green vegetables: greens (collards, mustard or turnip greens, beet greens, kale, chard, leafy lettuces), spinach, broccoli.

Orange vegetables: carrots, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, pumpkin.

Starchy vegetables: corn, white potatoes, green peas, lima beans.

Other garden vegetables: tomatoes, cabbage, celery, cucumber, onions, peppers, green beans, okra, zucchini, turnips, beets.

Dry beans and peas: pinto beans, navy beans, lentils, black-eyed peas.
What Types of Fruits Should I Eat?

**Citrus fruits:** oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, lemons, limes.

**Berries:** strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, cherries, cranberries.

**Melons:** cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon.

**Tropical fruits:** bananas, mangos, pineapple, pomegranate.

**Other fruits:** apples, pears, grapes, peaches, plums, apricots, nectarines, kiwi.

**Dried fruit:** raisins, prunes, dried apricots, dried apples.

Why Are Whole Grains and Beans Important?

Eating whole grains and beans is another way to improve your heart health. Whole grains and beans have even more fiber than vegetables and fruits.

Eating more fiber is important for many reasons. Fiber:

- Helps you feel full.
- Keeps you regular.
- Helps lower your chances of getting heart disease.

What Whole Grains Should I Eat?

Bread, tortillas, rice dishes, pasta, and hot and cold cereals are made from grains. There are two types of grains: whole grains and processed grains. Whole grains have the entire grain kernel which means they have more vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Whole grains include:

- Whole wheat flour
- Brown rice
- Whole oats
- Whole cornmeal

Whole grains do NOT include white flour, white rice, and regular pasta. Ideally, you should eat whole grains over processed grains any time you eat grains.
What Beans Should I Eat?

Beans are good sources of fiber and protein. Beans are a good substitute for meat because they are high in protein (like meat) but less expensive.

Beans come in a wide variety and include:
- Pinto beans
- Navy beans
- Black eyed peas
- Split peas
- Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- Lentils
- Black beans

A healthy eating plan includes beans you like three or more times per week.

How Much Fiber Do I Need?

Each day you should have at least 25 to 35 grams of fiber. It’s easy to get enough if you choose foods that are good sources of fiber at each meal and snack. There is no need to count fiber grams, just follow a few simple rules:
- Eat at least four servings of vegetables and about three servings of fruit each day. Eat the skin or peel, when possible.
- Eat beans and peas at least three times a week.
- Choose whole grain breads. Be careful! Breads that look “brown” are not always made from whole grain! Read the ingredient list and make sure that it lists whole wheat flour or whole grain as the first ingredient. Pick bread that has at least two grams of fiber per slice.
- Choose high-fiber cereals like bran flakes, shredded wheat, and old-fashioned oatmeal (not instant). Pick a cereal that has at least five grams of fiber per serving.

Summary

Here is a summary of key points about Vegetables, Fruits, Whole Grains, and Beans.
- Vegetables and fruits are a very important part of healthy eating and improving your heart health!
- You should try to eat at least seven servings of vegetables and fruits each day. Remember to eat a variety of the different types.
- Whole grains and beans are all good sources of fiber. Fiber in the diet reduces your chances of heart disease.
Check the goals you want to work on for the next contact.

1. Try for four or more servings of vegetables each day.

**A word about serving sizes:**
- In general, a half cup of a cooked vegetable and one cup of a raw vegetable (salad) is a serving size.
- Though it is good to aim for about four or more servings a day, it is also important to eat a variety of vegetables, as noted below.

**Eat a variety of dark-green and orange vegetables.**
- Try broccoli or greens.
- Include spinach, romaine, or other dark-green leafy lettuce in salads.
- Add chunks of sweet potatoes, butternut squash, or carrots to steamed or stir-fried vegetables.

**Keep costs down.**
- Buy fresh vegetables in season (look for a farmer’s market).
- Buy seasonal vegetables in bulk and freeze or can some for later.
- Grow your own.

**Go easy on starchy vegetables like white potatoes, corn, green peas, and lima beans.**
- Try to eat no more than one or two starchy vegetables a day.
- Eat regular potatoes in moderation, either baked, boiled, or fried in vegetable oil.
- Try a baked sweet potato as a substitute for a baked white potato.
- Add other vegetables to potatoes. Bake a vegetable dish with sliced potatoes, carrots, and green beans drizzled with vegetable oil and herbs or other low-salt seasonings (see Cookbook, pages 43-55).
Add variety to meals with vegetables.

- Add onions, mushrooms, peppers, tomatoes, or salsa to your omelets.
- Make sandwiches, wraps, or burritos with lots of lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, onions, or other sliced vegetables.
- Bring cut-up vegetables to work instead of eating vending machine snacks.
- Steam, fry, or sauté vegetables in vegetable oil.
- Buy frozen/canned vegetables or canned beans and peas that have low- or reduced salt (sodium). Rinse canned vegetables that have added salt. See pages C-77 and C-78 for tips on adding flavor without adding salt.

Spice up your vegetables

- Use onions, garlic, vinegar, herbs, spices, vegetable oil, or trans fat free margarine to season and add flavor to fresh greens and other vegetables. (See “Fresh Greens, Southern Style” and other ways of preparing vegetables on pages 43-55 of the Cookbook.)
- Use broccoli, carrots, or squash in place of white rice or pasta in your favorite soup or casserole.

2. Try for three or more different fruits each day.

- Fruit makes a tasty snack or dessert.
- Eating more fruit doesn't have to be expensive; buy fruit that is in season or pick your own.
- Add fruits like bananas, berries, or peaches to your cereal.
- Use very ripe fruit to make a blender smoothie (see pages 87-91 of the Cookbook for other fruit recipes).
- Dried fruit such as raisins, cranberries, or apricots are also good snacks but being mindful of portion size is important. One quarter of a cup or about a handful is considered one serving.
- As you add more fruit, make sure to do so in the healthiest ways.
- Eat whole fruit (fresh, frozen, or canned) instead of drinking fruit juice—whole fruit gives you more fiber, which also can help you feel full.
- Avoid canned or frozen fruits with added sugar or syrup (look for canned fruit labeled “in its own juice”).
- If you do get canned fruit in light or heavy syrup, drain off the syrup and eat the fruit without it.

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3. **Choose more whole grain breads. Try to eat two or more servings of whole grain bread products each day.**
   - Pick whole grain bread instead of white bread. Remember that multi-grain is not the same as whole grain. Look for whole wheat flour or whole grains as the first ingredient on the food label.
   - Check the label and choose breads with at least two grams of fiber per slice.

4. **Eat more beans and peas. Try to eat beans or peas three or more times per week.**
   - Beans and peas are a good source of fiber and protein and therefore can be a healthy, high fiber substitution for meat. They are also less expensive than meat.
   - Soak beans overnight to shorten the cooking time.
   - Use onions and garlic for seasoning, or season with vegetable oil or small pieces of ham, turkey, or beef.
   - Make a quick healthy meal with canned beans. Get the low-salt (low sodium) kind, or drain and rinse canned beans. See pages C-79 and C-80 for more information on cooking for one or on the run.

5. **Try other whole grain foods like brown rice, barley, and whole grain pasta. Aim to eat three or more servings each week.**
   - Whole grains are foods like brown rice and whole wheat bread and pasta. These foods are high in fiber and B vitamins.
   - Though brown rice tastes a bit different from white rice, it’s easy to get used to the taste. Many people prefer the taste of brown rice.
   - To get used to the taste of whole grain pasta, try mixing with regular pasta at first.
6. **Eat whole grains for breakfast. Try for three or more servings per week.**

- Choose whole grain cereals (ready-to-eat or cooked). Cereals like shredded wheat, bran flakes, or old-fashioned oatmeal are all good choices.

- Stay away from cereals with lots of added sugar (like frosted flakes). Aim for three grams of sugar per serving or less. (See pages C-81 and C-82 for more information about how to read labels.) If your cereal has dried fruit such as raisins aim for five grams of sugar per serving or less. You can sweeten your cereal by topping with bananas, berries, peaches, or other fruit.

- Munch on whole grain cereals for a healthy snack any time of the day!

- Avoid instant grits and other cereals that are high in salt (sodium). Aim for no more than 350 mg of salt per serving.
My Goals and First Steps

To make changes, it is important to make goals and keep track of your progress. On the other side of this sheet, write down the two goals you selected to work on today. Then write down your “First Steps” for achieving these goals. First Steps should be specific and realistic to get you started.

To plan First Steps, think about:

- When you will start working towards this goal.
- What you need to get started.
- If you can actually reach the goal.

Also, the other side of this sheet has two tables to help you keep track of your progress.
**Vegetables, Fruit, Whole Grains, and Beans**

**My Goals and First Steps**

Place this sheet where you will see it often (refrigerator or bathroom mirror). You may monitor goals by the week (left side of table) or by the day (right side of table).

**GOAL 1: Did you meet your goal? (Circle ☺ for Yes, or ☹ for No)**

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**GOAL 2: Did you meet your goal? (Circle ☺ for Yes, or ☹ for No)**

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