

# WELLNESS MINUTE

May 2023



**THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN A HEALTHY DIET**

**POWER UP YOUR HEART HEALTH WITH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

**RECIPE OF THE MONTH**

**BRISK WALKING**



# THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN A HEALTHY DIET: WHY YOUR PLATE NEEDS A RAINBOW OF COLORS

Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is crucial for maintaining good health and preventing chronic diseases. The nutrients found in fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that are vital to overall health and well-being. In this article, we'll discuss the many reasons why your plate needs a rainbow of colors.

First and foremost, fruits and vegetables are a rich source of vitamins and minerals. These nutrients play a critical role in maintaining the health of your body's cells, tissues, and organs. For example, vitamin C, which is found in many fruits and vegetables, helps support the immune system, while vitamin A, which is abundant in leafy greens and orange-colored fruits and vegetables, is important for eye health.

In addition to vitamins and minerals, fruits and vegetables are also loaded with antioxidants. Antioxidants are compounds that help protect your cells from damage caused by free radicals, which are unstable molecules that can cause oxidative stress and contribute to chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease. Antioxidants like beta-carotene, found in carrots and sweet potatoes, and lycopene, found in tomatoes, can help reduce the risk of these diseases.

Another important benefit of eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is their high fiber content. Fiber is essential for digestive health and can help reduce the risk of conditions like constipation, diverticulitis, and colon cancer. Fruits and vegetables are also low in calories and high in water content, which makes them a great choice for weight management.

So, how much should you be eating? The general recommendation is to aim for at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day, but ideally, you should aim for 7-10 servings. This may sound like a lot, but a serving is typically smaller than you might think. For example, a serving of fruit is typically one medium-sized piece, like an apple or a banana, while a serving of vegetables is about one cup of raw or cooked veggies.

To get the most benefit from your fruits and vegetables, it's important to eat a variety of colors. Different colors of fruits and vegetables contain different nutrients, so aim for a rainbow of colors on your plate. For example, dark leafy greens like spinach and kale are high in iron and calcium, while orange and yellow fruits and vegetables like carrots and sweet potatoes are rich in vitamin A.

In conclusion, eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is essential for maintaining good health. They provide essential nutrients, antioxidants, and fiber, and can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases. So, next time you're at the grocery store or planning your meals, aim to incorporate a rainbow of colors on your plate and reap the benefits of a healthy diet.

**Sources:**

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The Nutrition Source: Vegetables and Fruits. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/diet>.

# ***POWER UP YOUR HEART HEALTH WITH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:***

## ***THE ROLE OF A PLANT-BASED DIET IN REDUCING THE RISK OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE***



Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death worldwide. The good news is that you can take steps to reduce your risk, and one of the most effective ways to do so is by adopting a plant-based diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Numerous studies have linked a higher intake of fruits and vegetables to a reduced risk of heart disease. For example, a 2014 study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that people who ate a higher intake of fruits and vegetables had a lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Similarly, a 2017 meta-analysis published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* found that a higher intake of fruits and vegetables was associated with a lower risk of coronary heart disease.

So, what makes fruits and vegetables so beneficial for heart health? One reason is their high content of vitamins, minerals, and fiber, which are all essential for heart health. For example, potassium, which is found in many fruits and vegetables, can help lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of stroke. Fiber, which is abundant in whole fruits and vegetables, can help lower cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Another reason why a plant-based diet is good for the heart is that it can help promote healthy weight management. Fruits and vegetables are low in calories and high in fiber, which means they can help you feel full and satisfied while also keeping your calorie intake in check. This can help you maintain a healthy weight, which is important for reducing the risk of heart disease.

It's important to note that not all fruits and vegetables are created equal when it comes to heart health. Some of the best options include leafy greens, berries, citrus fruits, tomatoes, carrots, and sweet potatoes. These foods are high in nutrients like fiber, vitamin C, and beta-carotene, all of which have been linked to better heart health.

In conclusion, a plant-based diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables is an excellent way to promote heart health and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. So, next time you're planning your meals, aim to incorporate a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables and reap the benefits of a heart-healthy diet.

### **Sources:**

- American Heart Association. Potassium and High Blood Pressure. <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/how-potassium-can-help-control-high-blood-pressure>
- Mayo Clinic. Dietary Fiber: Essential for a Healthy Diet. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/fiber/art-20043983>

# Roasted Veggie and Quinoa Bowl with Citrus Dressing

Serves 4

Looking for a healthy, colorful and flavorful meal that will leave you feeling satisfied? Featuring a delicious blend of roasted vegetables, protein-packed quinoa, and a tangy citrus dressing, this dish is sure to become a staple in your recipe repertoire.

## Ingredients:

### For the roasted veggies:

- 1 small sweet potato, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced
- 1 zucchini, sliced
- 1 yellow squash, sliced
- 1 red onion, sliced
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper

### For the quinoa:

- 1 cup quinoa
- 2 cups water or vegetable broth

### For the citrus dressing:

- 2 tbsp orange juice
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup olive oil

### For the bowl:

- 2 cups baby spinach
- 1/2 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese

## Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. In a large bowl, toss the sweet potato, red bell pepper, zucchini, yellow squash, and red onion with olive oil, salt, and pepper.
3. Arrange the veggies in a single layer on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Roast for 20-25 minutes, or until the veggies are tender and lightly browned.
4. While the veggies are roasting, rinse the quinoa in a fine-mesh strainer and transfer it to a medium saucepan. Add water or vegetable broth and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover the saucepan, and simmer for 15-20 minutes, or until the quinoa is tender and the water is absorbed.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together the orange juice, lemon juice, honey, Dijon mustard, and olive oil to make the citrus dressing.
6. To assemble the bowls, divide the baby spinach between two bowls. Top with the roasted veggies and cooked quinoa. Drizzle with the citrus dressing and top with sliced strawberries and crumbled feta cheese.
7. Enjoy your delicious and healthy Roasted Veggie and Quinoa Bowl with Citrus Dressing!



# BRISK WALKING

One of the best exercises for heart health is brisk walking. Walking is a low-impact activity that is easy on the joints and can be done almost anywhere, making it an ideal choice for people of all ages and fitness levels. Brisk walking refers to walking at a pace that raises your heart rate and causes you to break a sweat, but not so fast that you can't carry on a conversation. It is recommended that adults aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, each week to promote heart health.

Brisk walking has numerous benefits for heart health. It can help lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart disease, and improve cholesterol levels. It can also help with weight management, which is important for reducing the risk of heart disease. Brisk walking can even improve your mood and reduce stress, both of which can have a positive impact on heart health.

To get the most benefit from brisk walking, it's important to wear comfortable shoes with good support and to warm up and cool down with stretching exercises. You should also start at a pace that is comfortable for you and gradually increase your speed and duration over time. If you have any health concerns or limitations, it's always a good idea to check with your healthcare provider before starting a new exercise program.

So, whether you're looking to reduce your risk of heart disease, improve your overall health, or simply enjoy the outdoors, brisk walking is an excellent exercise choice for heart health.

#### Sources:

American Heart Association. Walking for a Healthy Heart. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/walking/walking-for-a-healthy-heart>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical Activity and Health: The Benefits of Physical Activity. <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm>

Harvard Health Publishing. Walking: Your Steps to Health. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/walking-your-steps-to-health>



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