

MAY / JUNE 2022

HEALTHY CHOICES FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service



This material was partially
funded by USDA's
Supplemental Nutrition
Assistance Program —
SNAP. This institution is an
equal opportunity provider.



This work is supported
by the Expanded Food
and Nutrition Education
Program from the USDA
National Institute of
Food and Agriculture.

Health benefits of gardening

Growing your own food can be fun, rewarding, and healthful. In addition to delicious food, gardening has many health benefits. Fresh fruits and vegetables are full of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Research shows that eating fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet can reduce the risk of long-term diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer.

Gardening has also been shown to improve mental health and lower stress. Some studies have shown that being physically active in nature, or even simple exposure to nature, can improve mood, reduce anxiety, and enhance self-esteem. Children can also benefit from growing and caring for edible plants. Some studies have found that kids involved with gardening tend to make healthier food choices, eat more fruits and vegetables, and have improved social skills. Gardening is also a way for families to spend quality time together, manage and share garden tasks, and reap the benefits of the harvest.



If you do not think you have room for a backyard garden, think again. Some vegetables like carrots, lettuce, kale, and peppers do not require much space. They can be planted in containers, pots, or small spaces. Contact your local

Extension office for more information on growing your own food.

Source: Adapted from
<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2016/04.Plants:PartnersinHealth?>

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FOOD FACTS

Strawberries

Season:

May through June

Nutrition facts:

Strawberries are low in calories and high in nutrients. One cup of strawberries contains 55 calories. Strawberries are a great source of vitamin C. They also contain vitamin A, iron, fiber, and folic acid. Folic acid is especially important for childbearing women. When consumed in adequate amounts, it has been proven to prevent certain birth defects.

Selection:

Choose fully ripened, bright red berries. Strawberries do not ripen after they have been picked. Berries should be plump and have a natural shine with bright green, fresh-looking caps. Use strawberries as soon after picking as possible for the best flavor and highest nutritional value.

Storage:

Store strawberries in the refrigerator, covered, unwashed, with the caps on. Do not crowd. If you have the space, gently spread the berries on a cookie sheet and cover with plastic wrap. Use berries within 2 to 3 days.

Handling:

Handle strawberries gently. Never remove the caps before washing. The cap prevents water from soaking into the berry, which lessens the flavor and changes the texture. To wash, cover berries in cold water and lift gently out of the water to drain. Dry by placing berries in a single layer on paper towels. After washing, remove the caps if necessary. Give the cap a gentle twist or use the point of a sharp paring knife or pointed spoon. Pat berries dry with paper towels before serving whole or sliced, fresh or cooked.

Source: University of Kentucky
FCS Extension Plate It Up KY Proud

BASIC BUDGET BITES

More ways to save

Avoid paying top dollar for fruits and vegetables by using these tips:

- **Have a plan.** Before you shop, check what is currently in your home and think about how much food you need before you go shopping. Make a list and only buy items that you will be able to consume before they go bad. It may be worth checking a grocery store website to see what items are on sale.
- **Round up recipes.** Skim through PlanEatMove.com for healthy, low-cost recipes. Check out the videos on PlanEatMove to master cooking skills. The more comfortable you are cooking, the more likely your recipe will come out well which reduces food waste.
- **Explore the store.** Buying fruits and vegetables when they are in season is one way to save money. Consider comparing prices of fresh produce with canned or frozen items. They have similar nutritional content and often the prep work is already done for you. Aim for low-sodium or no-salt-added versions of canned products.

Source: Adapted from
<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2020/05/29/how-save-more-fruits-and-vegetables>





PARENT CORNER

Choosing healthier snacks

Here are some suggestions to help you and your family snack smarter:

- Choose nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables, seeds and nuts.
- Have a snack schedule to keep you feeling fueled throughout the day.
- Avoid snacking in front of the television which can distract you and lead to overeating.
- Portion out or make your snacks in advance to make them more convenient.
- When you snack, drink a glass of water to help keep you hydrated and leave you feeling satisfied.

Source: Adapted from Heather Norman-Burgdolf and Courtney Luecking. University of Kentucky Extension Specialists in Food and Nutrition. Tips for Healthier Snacking 10/2020

COOKING WITH KIDS

Fruit and Yogurt Breakfast Shake

- 1 banana (medium, very ripe, peeled)
- 3/4 cup pineapple juice
- 1/2 cup yogurt, low-fat vanilla
- 1/2 cup strawberries (remove stems and rinse)

1. Wash hands with soap and water, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds.
2. Blend banana with pineapple juice, yogurt, and strawberries in a blender.
3. Blend until smooth.
4. Divide shake between 2 glasses and serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings

Serving size: Half of recipe

Nutrition facts per serving:

160 calories; 1g total fat; 0.5g saturated fat; 0g trans fat; 5mg cholesterol; 45mg sodium; 35g total carbohydrate; 2g dietary fiber; 28g total sugars; 4g added sugars; 4g protein; 0% Daily Value of vitamin D; 10% Daily Value of calcium; 0% Daily Value of iron; 10% Daily Value of potassium

Source: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/fruit-and-yogurt-breakfast-shake>



RECIPE

Vegetable Packets

- 2 small zucchini, sliced
- 2 small yellow squash, sliced
- 4 small red potatoes, sliced
- 1/2 red onion, sliced
- 1/2 bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- 1/4 cup light Italian salad dressing
- Salt and pepper (optional, to taste)

1. Wash hands with soap and water, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds.
2. Heat oven to 400 degrees F.
3. In a large bowl, add all the sliced vegetables. Add dressing and toss until vegetables are coated.
4. Tear 2 large squares of aluminum foil and place half of the vegetable mixture on each piece. Place an equal piece of foil over the top of vegetable mixture and fold bottom piece with top sheet to form a packet.

5. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes.

6. Before you open the packets, poke holes in the foil with a fork. Be very careful opening the foil as the steam will be very hot and could burn you!
7. Empty vegetables onto serving plate or serve from foil packets.

Makes 5 servings

Serving size: 3/4 cup

Nutrition facts per serving: 140 calories; 3g total fat; 0.5g saturated fat; 0g trans fat; 0mg cholesterol; 135mg sodium; 27g total carbohydrate; 4g dietary fiber; 5g total sugars; 0g added sugars; 4g protein; 0% Daily Value of vitamin D; 2% Daily Value of calcium; 6% Daily Value of iron; 20% Daily Value of potassium

Source: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/grilled-vegetable-packets>



SMART TIPS

Safety tips for gardeners

- Wear gloves to avoid skin rashes, cuts, and contaminants.
- Keep harmful chemicals, tools, and equipment out of kids' reach. Read all instructions and labels so you use these items properly.
- Cut your risk for sunburn and skin cancer by wearing a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher.
- Protect against diseases carried by mosquitoes and ticks. Use insect repellent. Wear long-sleeved shirts and tuck pants into your socks.
- If you are outside in hot weather, drink plenty of water.
- Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness. Seek emergency medical care if needed.

Source: Adapted from U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

LOCAL EVENTS

If you are interested in nutrition classes, contact your Extension office.

VISIT US ONLINE AT
[EXTENSION.CA.UKY.EDU/COUNTY](https://extension.ca.uky.edu/county)