

# FIVE TO NINE - HEALTHY EATING EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK

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**Last week the British Nutrition Foundation celebrated Healthy Eating Week, encouraging people to eat at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day.**

Five was chosen as a *minimum* amount for the general public to aim for, when ideally 9+ portions per day is optimum. The more plant-based foods such as fruit and vegetables you add to a balanced diet, the better your overall health will be. You will have better bowel function, heart health and skin. You should also feel less tired and be able to stave off many illnesses more easily.

It isn't always easy to know how to add in fruits and veg to the diet if it isn't something you are used to doing. Knowing what is counted as a portion, and whether to eat mostly fruit over vegetables or vice versa, might not be so obvious.

## How to reach your 5 a day and beyond

The first rule of thumb is to make sure that your 5 to 9+ per day is made up of *mostly vegetables*. Fruits can be very high in sugar and although they are rich in vitamins, minerals and fibre, you should be eating a ratio of 2 fruit to 3 veg for your 5 a day, or 3 fruit to 6 veg for your 9 a day, and so on.

A portion size is around 80 grams. So that might be 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables (raw, cooked or frozen), a dessert bowl of salad, or 3 heaped tablespoons of pulses (such as lentils, beans or peas).

### A portion of fruit would look like:

- One banana, apple, pear, orange, or similar sized fruit
- Half an avocado or large grapefruit
- A slice of large fruit such as pineapple or melon
- Two satsumas, plums or similar sized fruit
- A handful of grapes, berries, or cherries
- One heaped tablespoon of dried fruit such as raisins or apricots, or three heaped tablespoons of fruit salad or stewed fruits

See: [www.healthyperformance.co.uk](http://www.healthyperformance.co.uk)

## How to add in fruit and veg to your day

There have been numerous studies proving the benefit of an increased consumption of plant foods. Even making a small change from no fruit and veg to one or two portions is a great start and will have positive effects.

### Breakfast

Think about breakfast, what do you eat? If it's porridge, you can add in some of your favourite berries or perhaps some grated apple, or even a blended homemade apple sauce or berry compote could be a tasty addition. If you prefer a cereal, then any fruit can be added in.

If it's toast that you like, then a hand full of rocket or wilted spinach with your eggs and toast can fit in well. Or if you are more of a 'toast and spread' person, then how about having a fruit salad on the side in a separate bowl?

### Snacks

For snacks, you could include humous, cut up pepper, carrots, celery and cucumber.

### Lunch and dinner

With lunch and dinner, you can really go to town on the vegetables! Have as many and as much as you like – roasted, stir fried or steamed – or have a large salad added in or on the side.

Experiment with variety and eat as many different colours in a week that you can – red, yellow, orange, purple and green. Just remember that white potatoes aren't counted as one of your five a day!

Click on the British Nutrition Foundation poster below for further tips and information...

## The Challenge

Have at least five portions of vegetables and fruit every day – choose a variety!

**Why is it important to have 5 A DAY?**

- Vegetables and fruit provide a range of different vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals (e.g. polyphenols) needed for health, as well as fibre which is important for the digestive system and can help reduce the risk of developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and bowel cancer.
- It is important to eat a wide variety of vegetables and fruit, as each type provides different amounts and combinations of nutrients.

**What counts towards 5 A DAY?**

Food	How much counts as one portion?	Notes
Vegetables, frozen or canned vegetables or fruit	80g	An 80g portion is approximately: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>one medium-sized piece of fruit such as a banana, apple, pear, orange or melon;</li> <li>two or more small fruits such as plums, satsumas, kiwi fruit or apricots;</li> <li>a large handful of berries, cherries or grapes;</li> <li>one dessert bowl of salad;</li> <li>three heaped tablespoons of vegetables.</li> </ul>
Cooked fruit	300g	A 300g portion counts as one portion of 5 A DAY but should be eaten at mealtimes.

**Fibre per portion (80g)**

Peas, boiled	4.5g	Pears	2.2g
Carrots	3.1g	Peppers	1.8g
Strawberries	3.0g	Blueberries	1.2g
Canned sweetcorn	2.5g	Bananas	1.1g
Broccoli	2.2g	Apples	1.0g

**Why do potatoes not count towards my 5 A DAY?**

Although potatoes provide us with fibre, vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin C and potassium, they are typically eaten as the main starchy food in a meal and are therefore considered a starchy carbohydrate (like rice, pasta and bread).