



BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois

WELLNESS  CAN'T WAIT

# Eat Your Fruits and Veggies for Better Health and Mood



## Wellness Can't Wait

- ☒ Read a book
- ☒ Wash the car
- ☐ **Get more fruits and veggies**

**Some things should be checked first.**

Many people know that eating fresh fruit and veggies each day is good for your physical health. It turns out eating plenty of them may also make you happier. Your **Wellness Can't Wait** for next month or next week. Start eating more fruits and veggies today.



# YOU MAY GET A FEEL-GOOD BOOST JUST KNOWING YOU'RE EATING HEALTHY, BUT THE BENEFITS ARE REAL. FRUITS AND VEGGIES FORM THE CORNERSTONE OF A HEALTHY DIET.

In one [British study](#), adults answered questions about what they ate and their mood. Those who reported feeling down in the dumps said they ate fewer than three servings of produce each day. Those who ate five or more servings of fruits and veggies had the brightest moods.

In another [study](#), adults who followed a Mediterranean diet rich in fruits and vegetables reported more positive feelings and fewer bad emotions.

You may not be able to travel around the Mediterranean, but you can eat like those who live in that region. They often live long and healthy lives naturally. Research shows they don't have cancer as often, or as much [heart disease](#).

Far from being a fad, the Mediterranean diet is a basic way of eating popular with doctors. It was even rated as the number one diet by a panel of health experts in the 2022 edition of **"U.S. News & World Report: Best Diet Rankings."**

The Mediterranean diet is popular because it is easy to follow. These four simple steps are at its core:

- Nosh on fruits, veggies and whole grains.
- Eat fish and seafood flavored with herbs and spices often.
- Avoid meat dishes as the base of your food plan.
- Enjoy sweets only as treats.

## Happy You're Eating Healthy

Nutrients in produce can help improve your brain function and nurture your mental health. Champs include:

- Complex carbs. All carbs provide an instant lift as glucose, insulin and serotonin flow through your veins. Unlike simple sugars, which often cause a quick crash, complex carbs from starchy veggies and fruits keep your blood sugar and hormone levels steady.
- B vitamins. Your body needs these nutrients to produce brain chemicals. Without enough, your emotions may run off track.



Some studies suggest that antioxidants in fruits and vegetables, including vitamins C and E, may help fight a process in your body that trigger cell damage. More research is needed, but it's likely antioxidants in fruits and vegetables may help improve your mood and protect against depression. Talk to your doctor if you're feeling depressed and ask if changes in your diet might help.

## Which to Choose?

The amount of fruits and veggies you should eat each day can differ with your age and health. Talk with your doctor or nutritionist about what is right for you.

Before you go to the grocery store or farmer's market, make your own mood-boosting shopping list. Try these easy-to-find, low-cost picks that can be added to meals:

- Peas (rich in complex carbs). Mix into pasta, stir into salads, or blend with onion, garlic, broth and spices for a tasty soup.
- Bananas (packed with complex carbs and vitamin B-6). Blend bananas into smoothies, slice and add to frozen yogurt, or toss with apples, lettuce and peanuts in a salad.
- Spinach (full of B vitamin folate). Add to the top of pizza, heat up frozen spinach as a side dish, or toss with chickpeas for a tasty beans-and-greens sauté. (If you are on certain blood thinners, ask your doctor before adding spinach to your diet.)