



Fruits and Vegetables are Budget Friendly

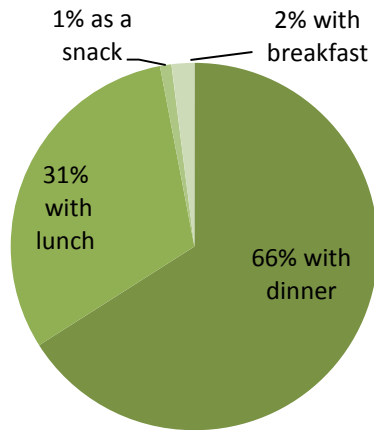
Accessible and affordable fresh fruits and vegetables are important to consuming a nutritionally adequate diet and achieving a healthy weight. Consuming a diet high in fruits and vegetables is associated with a decreased risk for chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and cancer. The low consumption of fruits and vegetables is believed to be a contributing factor to half of Americans living with one or more chronic conditions.



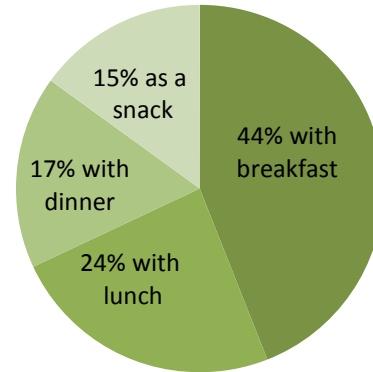
Military veterans are more likely than non-veterans to experience two or more chronic conditions.¹ Currently, the causes of increased chronic conditions among veterans is not clearly understood. Six percent of adults consume the recommended daily amounts of vegetables and eight percent consume the recommended daily amounts of fruit. In addition to most adults facing challenges eating the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables, only seven percent of children consume the recommended daily amounts of vegetables and nineteen percent consume the recommended daily amounts for fruit. Consuming sufficient amounts of fruits and vegetables is important to the healthy well-being of active service members, veterans and their families. Locating fresh fruits and vegetables that are affordable and appetizing may require visits to a variety of grocery shopping venues. Whether shopping at a [commissary](#) or [farmers market](#), visiting a [community garden](#), picking your own farm, or participating in a [community supported agriculture](#) partnership (CSA), a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables are accessible.



U.S. Population Mealtime Vegetable Consumption



U.S. Population Mealtime Fruit Consumption



Source: Produce for a Better Health Foundation. State of the Plate; 2010 Study on America’s Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables.

The Cost of Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Food prices may fluctuate throughout the year particularly for fresh fruits and vegetables that are available seasonally. During the month of April in 2014, a month’s worth of food for a family of four costs between \$561 and \$1092.² Purchasing adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables that satisfy the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 for a family of four should constitute a minimum of 46% of a food budget.³ Currently, fruits and vegetables account for approximately six and a half percent of the average family’s food budget. Obtaining the recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables is estimated to cost \$2.50 per person per day.⁴

To access affordable fresh fruits and vegetables consider the following:

- Flexibility.** Maintain flexibility regarding purchasing seasonal and unseasonal fruit and vegetables. Fruit and vegetables that are in season cost less and taste better.
- Freeze.** Cut up and freeze fruit that is ripening quickly and vegetables that are beginning to spoil.
- Farmers markets.** Consider visiting farmers markets especially near closing time to bargain for remaining items.
- Community gardens.** Community gardens provide an opportunity to use shared spaces and collaborate with others to maintain and produce fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Purchase fruit and vegetables on sale.** Check local stores and markets for the different fruits and vegetables on sale.

Eating the recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables may be easier and more affordable than you think. Incorporating enough fruits and vegetables to meet daily recommendations can be as simple as enjoying a half cup of blueberries with yogurt and a half a cup of orange juice with breakfast; then an apple as a snack; with lunch, nibbling on a half a



cup of carrots; and for dinner feasting on two vegetable side dishes such as a large sweet potato and a cup of broccoli. It's just that easy!

For more healthy eating tips, please visit the Fruits and Veggies Month Toolbox at:

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/hp-toolbox-july.aspx>

References

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2. United States Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels, U.S Average, April 2014. <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/FoodPlans/2014/CostofFoodApr2014.pdf>. May 2014. Accessed June 10, 2014.
3. Center for Science in the Public Interest. Healthy Bargains: Fruits and Vegetables are Nutritious and Economical. <http://www.cspinet.org/healthybargains.pdf>. July 2013. Accessed June 3, 2014.
4. Stewart, H., Hyman, J., Buzby, J. et al. How Much do fruit and Vegetables Costs? <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/133287/eib71.pdf>. February 2011. Accessed June 10, 2014.