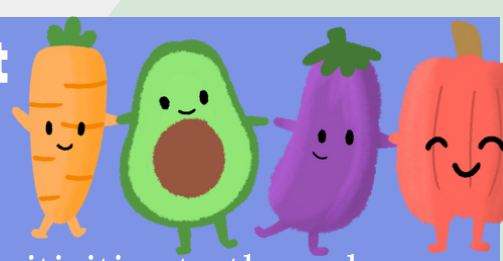
5 A-DAY A DIFFERENT WAY!

Why are fruits and vegetables important?



These colourful foods give our bodies important vitamins and minerals that we need to grow, stay healthy, and keep our bodies working the way they should. They also contain a lot of fibre which supports healthy digestion and good gut health. For these reasons, it is recommended that we all should eat 5 different portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

Reasons why getting enough fruit and vegetables can be difficult



Some people have a small appetite and can't eat enough of these foods. Others may have sensory sensitivities to the colour, texture, smell, taste and appearance of fruits and vegetables. As fruits and vegetables are natural foods, they are not predictable. For example, blueberries can be firm or squishy, different shades of blue or purple, different sizes, and be sweet or sour. Someone with sensory sensitivity will typically prefer processed foods as they are very consistent and also tasty!

A different way to 5-a-day

"Food fortification" means adding these important vitamins and minerals to other foods. We can use fortified foods to help us get the nutrients we need when it's hard to eat enough fruits and vegetables. Although you should check individual packets, examples of helpful fortified foods include:

- Any food with white or brown (non-wholemeal) flour has iron, calcium, niacin and thiamine added by UK law
- Many children's yogurts have added vitamin D
- Many breakfast cereals, cereal bars and rusks are well fortified
- Grain based hot drinks (such as Ovaltine and Horlicks) and some milkshake powders (such as Nesquik) have added micronutrients
- Some squashes (such as Ribena and Vimto) often have added vitamin C and D, and some juices (such as Sunny D) have more added vitamins
- Many preserved and processed foods have ascorbic acid (otherwise known as vitamin C) in them, including some potato products such as instant mash
- Milk powders are often fortified with vitamin D and A and using formula milk can be a helpful tool to support vitamin and mineral intake

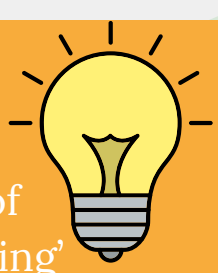


Supplements



Pharmacies and supermarkets sell a range of vitamin and mineral supplements. They are available flavoured or unflavoured and as liquids, syrups, powders, gummies, sprinkles, tablets and sprays. Stick-on patches are available but lack a good evidence base. Try to get a supplement that has as many vitamins and minerals as possible. Some can be taken in combination (such as adding iron-enriched water) but ask for advice from a pharmacist first. Some people may also need specific supplements prescribed for them. A dissolvable fibre supplement could also be helpful.
But remember: accepting supplements isn't easy. Therefore accepting and taking one with only a few vitamins in it is still a big win to celebrate!

Top tips for sucess!



- Food fortification can lead to negative media labels like being 'ultra-processed'. But processed foods are helpful to the health of those with restricted diets. You should ignore broad 'healthy eating' media messages when thinking about what is right for you or your child and aim to take or offer fortified foods whenever possible.
- Fruit juice, and tinned fruits and vegetables are often better accepted. This is because they typically have better sensory consistency.
- Ideally take a multivitamin and mineral supplement every day. Link this to a routine that is not involved with food, such as at bedtime. Try to think of it as a medication. If daily is too difficult, try once a week and build up.

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