

How to enjoy Healthy Summer fruits

As the temperature heats up this Summer, the days get longer, and activities abound. Fresh fruits can help you and the children in your care survive (and thrive!) all season long.

Benefits of Summer fruits

Summer fruits give you energy and nutrients your body needs, help cool you down and stay hydrated, and can even help protect you from the sun.

And overall, fruits have been found to be spectacularly effective in treating and preventing a variety of health conditions.

For example, they have been found to help reduce heart disease. The province of North Karelia in Finland convinced local dairy farmers to grow berries on some of their pasturelands to increase fruit consumption and improve the health of its citizens. By replacing animal-based foods with berries, along with other healthful changes, in only one generation, the region went from having one of the highest rates of heart disease in the world to one of the lowest.

Impressive! But that's not all... Fruits have also helped patients all over the world lose weight and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. And contrary to popular belief, fruits can reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.





Fruit is naturally sweet (no added sugar needed) and delicious — whether enjoyed on its own or in a smoothie, salad, dessert, or another dish.

Just as important as implementing good habits is that adults have conversations with children and provide opportunities for them to learn about eating nutritious foods and how that contributes to good health.

Healthy eating habits begun in childhood can have a lasting effect. Every child also needs opportunities every day to be physically active and practice new physical skills, either indoors or outdoors.

Eat fruit in season

As much as possible, choosing locally grown, seasonal produce is often the best choice for your health and for the planet. (This way, produce doesn't have to be picked rock-hard and transported over long distances). But fruits in season are usually fresher, tastier, and more nutritious.

Rather than being picked early, seasonal fruits are typically allowed to ripen naturally. So, the plant has more exposure to sun, and the fruit has higher levels of antioxidants.

Plus, in-season fruits are usually at their best price — which means you can eat healthfully and stick to your budget.



Kid-friendly ways to enjoy Fruits in Summer

- Fruit smoothies: combine yoghurt and milk with frozen fruit e.g. berries, banana



- Yoghurt pots: natural or greek-style yoghurt with fresh berries or passionfruit.

- Fruit kebabs with seasonal berries



- Fruit muffins made with wholemeal flour and sweetened with overripe banana or grated apple.

- Fruit salad made with a variety of colourful fruit.



- Fruit juices made with fresh seasonal fruits.



Best 3 Fruits in Summer

1. Watermelon

Watermelons are much more than just water. These fruits are high in vitamin A (which is important for eye health and boosts immunity) and in vitamin C (which strengthens the immune system).

Watermelon has a good level of vitamin B6 (which also helps the immune system). And it's also a good source of potassium, a mineral necessary for water balance (and preventing muscle cramps) that also helps keep your heart healthy.

And this fruit is a fantastic source of lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that protects skin from sun damage. In fact, the bioavailability of lycopene from watermelon appears to be even greater than from red tomatoes.

Watermelons help:

- Prevent heat stroke
- Prevent cancer
- Boost your immune system
- Support eye health and prevent macular degeneration
- Support heart health and lower blood pressure



How to choose a watermelon

1. Look for a firm, symmetrical watermelon that is free from bruises, dents, or cuts.
2. Lift it up. The watermelon should be heavy for its size (because it's mostly water).
3. Turn it over. The underside of the watermelon should have a creamy yellow spot from where it sat on the ground and ripened in the sun. (A white or pale green spot suggests immaturity.)
4. Also, you can knock on the watermelon. A fully ripened watermelon should have a deep, hollow sound when you knock on it, rather than a solid, shallow sound.

How to store watermelons

- Store whole watermelons at room temperature.
- Refrigerate cut watermelons in airtight containers and use within five days.

2. Mango

The mango fruits have more than 20 vitamins and minerals and lots of fiber (which helps you stay full and is essential for good digestion).

They are an excellent source of vitamin A (good for your eyes and immune system) and vitamin C (which help fight infection and chronic disease) and a good source of potassium — in fact, they have even more of this mineral than bananas! When you eat a mango, you'll get the benefit of the antioxidant zeaxanthin, which filters out harmful blue light rays and helps protect eye health.

Though they can be very sweet, mangoes are relatively low on the glycemic index, so moderate quantities usually won't spike blood sugar.

Mangoes can help:

- Fight heat stroke
- Boost the immune system
- Control blood sugar
- Help prevent cancer
- Improve eye health
- Ward off heart disease



How to choose a mango

1. Pick up the mango and lightly squeeze it. A ripe mango will give slightly, like a peach.
2. Smell the mango at the stem. Ripe mangoes generally have a fragrant, sweet, fruity aroma.

Note: Mangoes are on the Environmental Working Group's Clean Fifteen list, which means they have a relatively low amount of pesticides.

How to store mangoes

- Firm mangoes can be left on the counter at room temperature for a couple of days to ripen. (Or place the fruit in a paper bag with an apple to speed up the process.)
- You may be able to store ripe mangoes in the fridge for a few days without them going bad.
- Store cut mango in an airtight container in the fridge and eat within one to two days.



3. Strawberries

Strawberries are one of the top 50 foods containing the most antioxidants per serving – so they are powerful disease-fighters.

Significant amounts of phytonutrients and flavonoids give them their bright color. Strawberries are high in vitamin C (more ounce for ounce than citrus fruit), fiber, and manganese (a trace mineral needed for many vital functions).

They are also a good source of potassium and folate (one of the B vitamins that converts carbs into energy, among other benefits). And they're rich in antioxidants, such as quercetin, which is a natural anti-inflammatory.

Strawberries can help:

- Ward off cancer
- Boost your immunity
- Reduce inflammation
- Maintain healthy vision
- Lower the risk of cardiovascular disease
- Improved regulation of blood sugar, especially when consumed after a meal



How to choose strawberries

- 1.Choose shiny, firm, plump strawberries with a bright red color. Caps should be bright green and intact. (Once picked, they don't ripen further.)
- 2.Avoid shriveled, mushy or leaky berries.
3. If possible, choose organic strawberries to avoid pesticides.

How to store strawberries

- Do not wash until ready to eat. Store in the fridge (in the crisper drawer if possible) for three to five days.
- If one berry in the basket or bowl is molded, this means mold spores have probably traveled throughout the entire package, so all the strawberries should be washed well or, depending on the level of contamination, discarded.

REFERENCES:

<https://foodrevolution.org/blog/food-and-health/summer-fruits-health-benefits/>

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/parent-resources/childrens-health-nutrition/>

