

## Why Fruits and Vegetables

## In the Spotlight

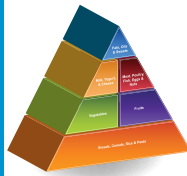
## September is National Cholesterol Education Month

## Fresh & Healthy recipe of the month

## De-Cluttering is Good for Home and Health

## Why Fruits and Vegetables?

Fruits and vegetables are more than colorful; they also supply our bodies with many important nutrients that reduce our risk of certain diseases. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends eating more fruits and vegetables (5 a day) than any other food group.



Here are some of the nutrients found in fruits and vegetables and their benefits:

- **Calcium** – Essential for strong bones and teeth as well as healthy of muscles and nerves. Fortified juice, collard or turnip greens, spinach, edamame (soy beans), and chickpeas are good sources of Calcium.
- **Fiber** – Diets rich in fiber have been shown to decrease the risk of coronary heart disease. Fiber-rich foods include: apples, lentils, lima beans, pinto beans, pears and strawberries.
- **Folate** – Diets rich in folate may reduce a woman's risk of having a child with a brain or spinal cord defect. Fruits and veggies rich in folate include asparagus, broccoli, chickpeas, spinach and strawberries.
- **Iron** – Needed for normal functioning of all cells and healthy blood. Good sources of iron include spinach, lentils, beans and dried apricots.
- **Magnesium** – Necessary for healthy bones. A lack of magnesium may result in muscle cramps and high blood pressure. Aim to get a few servings of nuts, beans, cooked spinach, okra, and butternut squash each day to get your magnesium.
- **Potassium** – Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain healthy blood pressure. Pink beans, lima beans and small white beans are rich in Potassium.
- **Sodium** – Needed for normal cell functioning; but too much sodium is associated with high blood pressure. Fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium but some of the lowest sodium fruits and veggies are artichokes, bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, radishes and sweet potatoes.
- **Vitamin A** – Known to keep eyes and skin healthy and protects against infection. Cantaloupe, carrots, grapefruit, romaine lettuce, mangos, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and watermelon are all good sources of Vitamin A.
- **Vitamin C** – Can help to heal cuts and wounds and contributes to healthier teeth and gums. Fruits and vegetables that are high in Vitamin C include bell peppers, cabbage, cantaloupe, lemons, limes, oranges, pineapple and summer squash.



### References:

[http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page\\_id=115](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page_id=115)

[http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page\\_id=52](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page_id=52)

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

Log into your MyBlueService account for more details:  
[www.bcbsfl.com/MyBlueService](http://www.bcbsfl.com/MyBlueService)> WebMD Nutrition Lifestyle Improvement Program

# In the Spotlight

## Fresh & Healthy Recipe of the Month

On April 22, participants in the St. Johns River Water Management District's Biggest Winner contest celebrated successes and vowed to continue the fitness and healthy eating habits they developed through the 12-week contest. Only two employees took top prizes, but everyone came out a winner in The Biggest Winner contest. With the assistance of an onsite Fitness Trainer and a nutritionist, the three teams lost a total of 444 pounds.

Two themes emerged as the major motivating factors during the contest:

1. Working out to support their team effort, and
2. Making necessary lifestyle changes.

Robert Burks, participant from the Red Team, said, "The team concept was good because you can let exercise slide if it's just you. I didn't want to let them [my team]



Photos courtesy of: St. Johns River Water Management District

down." Even after an injury and surgery threatened to sideline him, Burks kept up with his routine and weight-loss efforts and won The Biggest Winner for the men's category. Another contest participant, April Kurtz added, "This is just

the beginning for us. Even though the contest is over, we intend to work out together on our same schedule."

St. Johns River Water Management District's wellness program focuses on helping employees to make long-term healthy changes in their lifestyle. The participants in the Biggest Winner challenge were armed with the guidance of a Fitness Trainer and a nutritionist on how to make lasting behavioral changes in physical activity and nutritional habits. Team participants were required to work out with their trainer at least twice per week and at least one other day on their own. In addition to praising their team members for helping to motivate each other, all three teams praised their fitness trainer for keeping them all on track.

Chili peppers are the vegetable of the month. There are several varieties of chili peppers and they vary in color, flavor and heat intensity. This recipe makes a nutrition-packed side dish, or toss in some grilled fish or chicken for a complete meal.



### Cherry Pepper Salad

#### Ingredients:

- 1 ¼ cup fresh sweet cherries, pitted
- 1 cup each thinly sliced sweet yellow pepper and green pepper
- ¼ cup thinly sliced mild chili peppers
- 2 Tbsp finely chopped onion
- 2 Tbsp white wine vinegar
- ½ Tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp sugar
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp pickled ginger strips, optional
- 4 cups mixed greens

#### Directions:

Toss together all ingredients except greens; refrigerate 1 hour or longer. Serve on mixed greens. Each serving equals 1 ½ cup fruit or vegetables. Makes 4 servings.

*Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 80, Protein 2g, Fat 2g, Calories from Fat 23%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 15g, Fiber 3g, Sodium 100mg.*

To learn more about the fruit or vegetable of the month go to: [www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/chili\\_peppers.html](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/chili_peppers.html)

## September is National Cholesterol Education Month

Your body uses cholesterol to produce hormones, vitamin D and the bile acids that help to digest fat. Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made by the body in the liver, but it can also be found in certain foods like meat, eggs and dairy products (whole milk). Your body actually needs some cholesterol in order to function properly.

However, your body needs only a small amount of cholesterol to meet its needs, and under normal circumstances, it's able to produce all that it needs. If your body has too much cholesterol it can cause health problems. When too much cholesterol is present, plaque (a thick, hard deposit) may form in the body's arteries, and narrows the space for blood to flow to the heart.



High cholesterol doesn't make you feel sick. It's usually found during a routine cholesterol and triglycerides test, a blood test that measures cholesterol levels. And while higher cholesterol is often a consequence of aging, younger people can have it, too. It doesn't matter how old you are, high cholesterol poses a big health risk. Unhealthy cholesterol levels can boost your risk of heart attacks, strokes, and other problems. There are several types of cholesterol, which sometimes makes it confusing to understand your values or numbers to track:

- HDL is the "good cholesterol." HDL attaches to bad cholesterol and pushes it to the liver, which filters it out of the body, reducing the amount of bad cholesterol in your system. This is the only cholesterol number you want to see go up. Desirable number: **60 mg/dl or higher.**
- LDL is the "bad cholesterol." It can clog your arteries, increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. Optimal number: **Less than 100 mg/dl.**

- Total cholesterol is the sum of all types of cholesterol in your blood. This number is less significant than your HDL and LDL levels. Desirable number: **Less than 200 mg/dl.**
- Triglycerides, while not cholesterol, are another type of fat in your bloodstream. Excess calories, alcohol or sugar in the body are converted into triglycerides and stored in fat cells throughout the body, increasing your risk of cardiovascular problems. Your blood should flow smoothly through your arteries. High triglyceride levels make the blood thicker and less fluid (think of molasses). Ideal number: **Less than 150 mg/dl.**

While high cholesterol can be hereditary, lifestyle behaviors largely influence your cholesterol levels. Fortunately, there are plenty of things you can do to lower your cholesterol.

- Eat a healthy diet- Consume a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products and lean proteins such as fish. Reduce red meats, sugar sweetened foods and drinks and fried or processed foods.
- Lose weight- Even a moderate weight loss of 5-10% can reduce your cholesterol.
- Get Active- Aim to get some form of physical activity for at least 30 minutes, most days of the week.
- Take medications (if prescribed)- If your doctor has prescribed a cholesterol -lowering medication, it should be used in addition to healthy eating habits, weight loss, and physical activity.



<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/chol/wyntk.pdf>

<http://www.webmd.com/cholesterol-management/default.htm>

See MyBlueService for further details: [www.bcbsfl.com/MyBlueService](http://www.bcbsfl.com/MyBlueService)> WebMD Health Management Center for Cholesterol or WebMD Nutrition Lifestyle Improvement Program.

## De-Cluttering is Good for Your Home and Health

Do you have a tough time getting rid of stuff? When you're not organized, you spend more time looking for things. When you spend more time looking for things, you have less time to take care of yourself, such as preparing healthy snacks and meals, participating in physical activity, spending quality time with family and friends and enjoying life. Simply put, clutter creates stress.

Spending more time searching for things can leave you feeling frustrated, angry and unproductive. This causes stress to your body and mind by increasing a stress hormone known as cortisol that increases your blood sugar and can result in an insulin increase, making you hungrier and more prone to grab the wrong foods. Chronic stress can lead to poor sleep patterns and fatigue, which can contribute to weight gain, irritability, and less desire to do physical activity. This can affect the foods you choose which keeps the cycle going—fatigue, lack of motivation, depression, stress, weight gain. You get the picture. Clutter spills over into every aspect of life.

Trying to remember where things are and all you have to get done on your to-do-list is a big mental drain, too. Think of all the minutes we waste looking for items that aren't where they should be. When it comes to clearing clutter, it isn't about the stuff itself: it's about the life you want to live.

Decluttering your home could be the first step to shedding unwanted pounds. Organize your home before you start on your body. Once your home is free of all the excess papers and other items taking up space, then it's easier to create meals that are healthy and will encourage families to eat together rather than around the television.

Start with the kitchen. If your kitchen is overstocked with junk food, as well as disorganized, it's difficult to make the best food choices. A kitchen that is jumbled with high calorie snacks is not conducive to losing weight. Once you've decluttered, it'll be easier to prepare meals at home. Eating at home more often allows you to have better control of your portions and how your food is prepared (less hidden fat).

1. Purge your pantry of unhealthy foods that aren't on your food plan.
2. Clean out refrigerator and freezer, leaving only items that are still safe to eat.

Exercise energizes us physically, mentally and emotionally. You can burn calories by doing chores around the house. Turn on music to make it less of a chore and get busy getting organizing.

The mind is a terrible thing to clutter. Between a zillion to-dos, work and family life, errant worries, and obligations, it's no wonder you have a cluttered mind. Start by learning to let go. "Clean sweep" your thoughts with a hot bath, a meditation practice, a long walk or a phone call.

So if you want to look better, feel better, have more energy, and reduce risk factors for chronic diseases, start by getting organized. Better health will surely follow.

### To cope with clutter:

- Give everything a storage place and put it back when you are done.
- Make a short daily to-do list. When it's on paper, it's out of your head.
- Divide a big pile of "stuff" into smaller containers. A few small sorts are easier than one big sort.
- Take action. Choose one area to get under control; set a timer for 20 minutes and dive in.
- See a project through until it's complete. For example: do not put the mail down; stand over the shredder and sort it right then.
- Love it or lose it! Keep only the items that you use regularly and/or find beautiful and uplifting. When in doubt, throw it out. (Or donate to a worthy cause.)

See WebMD link after you sign into your MyBlueService account to review:

[WebMD Stress Management Lifestyle Improvement Program](#)



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