

Healthy Eating

Canned Fruits and Vegetables Can Be a Healthy Alternative

By Kari Bachman

Many things often impede our efforts to eat the five daily servings of vegetables and fruits that our bodies need.

For many, the local store either doesn't sell fresh vegetables and fruits, or they're too expensive. Others live far from the supermarket, and many have no transportation, so they shop infrequently. Some don't have refrigerators.

When fresh fruits and vegetables are unavailable, canned goods can be a healthy alternative. Unlike fresh products, they can be stored for future use.

It's best to rinse canned vegetables and fruits in fresh water before eating them or adding them to recipes, because manufacturers often add salt to vegetables and sugar to fruits when processing them. Low salt and sugar products are available, but they usually cost more.

People often think canned vegetables and fruits taste bad. But in a University of Massachusetts study conducted in 2000, most people couldn't tell the difference between canned and fresh produce when used in recipes.

Many also think canned produce lacks nutrients. However, when fresh vegetables and fruits are stored for a long time, they lose key vitamins, such as folate and Vitamin C. On the other hand, canned goods retain their freshness and most of their nutrients for 1 to 2 years.

Tomatoes actually have a higher nutrient value when processed into items such as tomato sauce or paste. Tomatoes are very high in lycopene, a beneficial substance that fights free radicals, which can produce some types of cancer. Lycopene occurs naturally in tomatoes, but it is more accessible to our bodies when the tomatoes have been processed.

When shopping, don't forget to pick up several cans of vegetables and fruits. They're convenient and nutritious, and they taste good too!

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