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Why is it important to eat fruit?

Eating fruit provides many health benefits. People who eat more fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Fruits provide nutrients vital for your body's health and maintenance.

Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables may:

- Reduce risk of stroke and other cardiovascular diseases
- Reduce risk of type II diabetes
- Protect against certain cancers, such as mouth, stomach, and colon-rectum cancer
- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease
- Reduce the risk of developing kidney stones and may help to decrease bone loss
- Be useful in helping to lower calorie intake

Nutrients

- Fruits are important sources of many nutrients, including potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and folate (folic acid). Examples of foods with these nutrients can be found in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*
- Most fruits are naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories. None have cholesterol
- Diets rich in potassium may help maintain healthy blood pressure. Fruits rich in potassium include bananas, prunes, dried peaches and apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, and oranges
- Dietary fiber from fruits, as part of an overall healthy diet, helps reduce blood cholesterol levels and may lower the risk of heart disease. Fiber is important for proper bowel function. It helps reduce constipation and diverticulosis. Fiber-containing foods such as fruits help provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories. Whole or cut-up fruits are sources of dietary fiber; fruit juices contain little or no fiber
- Vitamin C is important for growth and repair of all body tissues, helps heal cuts and wounds, and keeps teeth and gums healthy
- Folate (folic acid) helps the body form red blood cells. Women of childbearing age who may become pregnant and those in the first trimester of pregnancy should consume adequate folate, including folic acid from fortified foods or supplements. This reduces the risk of neural tube defects, spina bifida, and anencephaly during fetal development

