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THE VELMA B COX FOUNDATION FOR TYPE II DIABETES & HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



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EAT MORE VEGETABLES TO FIGHT DIABETES AND HYPERTENSION!

~LISA JO FINSTROM, MS, CNS, LDN~

As children, we were told to eat our vegetables. But how many servings a day are necessary and what is meant by a serving?

The number and type of vegetables best for you depends on your individual health history. For example, if you are elderly and infirm, well-cooked vegetables might be best. Or, if you need to support detox pathways in your liver, extra servings of cruciferous vegetables might be helpful.

My goal is to make recommendations appropriate for most adults, especially those trying to avoid diabetes and high blood pressure as they age.



First of all, what do we mean by a serving? I define a serving of vegetables to be one cup of raw vegetables, such as from a fresh salad, to be a serving. I define ½ a cup of cooked vegetables to be a serving.

I recommend that my clients eat at least 4-5 servings of vegetables a day. Some research suggests 5 or more servings a day is optimal (Williamson, 2017). For many people, eating 4-5 servings of vegetables a day is both challenging and doable.



Years ago, the Beef Industry ran a famous ad campaign, “Beef. It's what's for dinner.” The main message was that you should start with beef.

I recommend the opposite. With meal planning, first plan your vegetables for the week, and then choose sources of protein that fit your lifestyle, budget and dietary preferences. Make the vegetables the star of your meal and not an afterthought. Otherwise, it's very challenging to reach a goal of 4-5 servings a day. But if you do so, you'll help to lower your risk of Type 2 Diabetes and high blood pressure.

Here are some simple ideas:



~HOMEMADE COLESLAW~

I start with a pre-shredded bag of cabbage and carrots, available at most grocery stores. Both of these vegetables are great sources of fiber, which helps with weight management. The carrots contain beta carotene which converts to vitamin A. Cabbage is a cruciferous vegetable and useful for supporting detox pathways in the liver. This is especially useful to know if you must take pharmaceutical medications.

HOMEMADE COLESLAW CONT...

I then make a homemade dressing for the slaw.

- Olive oil is great for supporting cardiovascular health.
- A few tablespoons of mayonnaise
- A squeeze of lemon for extra vitamin C.
- Finely chopped hot pepper has capsaicin that may help increase fat burning (Arnarson, 2019).
- A tablespoon or so of local honey sweetens the slaw, which contains B vitamins -- important for making energy out of glucose, or sugar.

Serve homemade coleslaw at any meal, including breakfast.



~HOMEMADE VEGETABLE SOUP~

I love to start a meal with a cup of nourishing vegetable soup, using local seasonal produce.

- Sauté diced carrots, celery and onion in a big pot. Celery has long been recognized for its ability to lower blood pressure, as well as onion (Varma, 2019). Add chopped garlic for extra flavor and even more antihypertensive benefits.
- I use a healthy oil such as avocado.
- For the base of the soup, choose vegetable broth or chicken broth, according to your preferences. Homemade is best, but organic boxed broth works as well.



HOMEMADE VEGETABLE SOUP CONT...

- Add a variety of chopped vegetables for variety. One of my favorites is green beans which provide more vitamin C and fiber.
- Add a legume or bean of your choice, including black beans, chickpeas, or black-eyed peas for extra fiber and protein.
- Legumes are great for blood sugar issues because they provide a slow and steady form of complex carbohydrates.
- If you used canned beans, be sure to wash them before adding to the soup to remove added sodium.
- Don't forget to season with sea salt, black pepper and whatever fresh or dried herbs you prefer.



~LEAFY GREENS~

The leaves of edible plants have remarkable health benefits and should be included in the diet as much as possible. Strive for using a variety of greens to maximize the different benefits.

- Spinach is high in folate, needed to make healthy red blood cells.
- Beet greens are full of beta-carotene and potassium. Potassium is an important electrolyte that supports normal blood pressure.



LEAFY GREENS CONT...

- Lettuce is a good source of magnesium, critical to regulating blood pressure as well as energy levels. It also contains vitamin K which helps support normal blood clotting in the body.
- If you're going to make a salad, add other vegetables to your leafy greens for added color, texture and nutrients.
- Tomatoes provide vitamin C as well as the antioxidant lycopene which helps reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Avocados – technically a fruit -- are a great source of fiber, as well as heart-healthy fats and potassium.
- For a salad dressing, avoid bottled products which contain unhealthy oils such as canola and high amounts of sodium.
- You can make a healthy salad dressing by mixing 4 parts heart healthy olive oil, one part apple cider vinegar, a tablespoon of honey and fresh herbs of choice.

I hope this helps you to realize how easy it is to make vegetables the star of every meal. Eat 4-5 servings a day to reduce your risk of Type 2 Diabetes, high blood pressure, as well as cardiovascular disease.

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Sources:

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