

Five a Day

Five servings of fruits and vegetables a day keep the doctor away

BY KIMBERLY YAVORSKI

Ben Franklin was right on target when he came up with the saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." In fact, he could have expanded his pithy saying to include five servings of all fruits and vegetables. That's because recent studies have shown that eating fruits and vegetables wards off cancer, heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and kidney damage.

According to the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), one in four deaths in the U.S. is from cancer, and the American Cancer Society says that at least one in three of those deaths is directly related to dietary factors. The AICR, in its recently released report, *Food, Nutrition, and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective*, recommends eating 15 to 30 ounces of a variety of fruits and vegetables a day and 20 to 30 ounces a day of a variety of cereals, legumes, plantains, roots, and tubers. The report also recommends the limiting of alcohol, fatty foods, salt, and red meat.

According to the AICR, you can cut can-

cer risk by 60 to 70 percent, or 30 to 40 percent if you smoke, by eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, staying physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight.

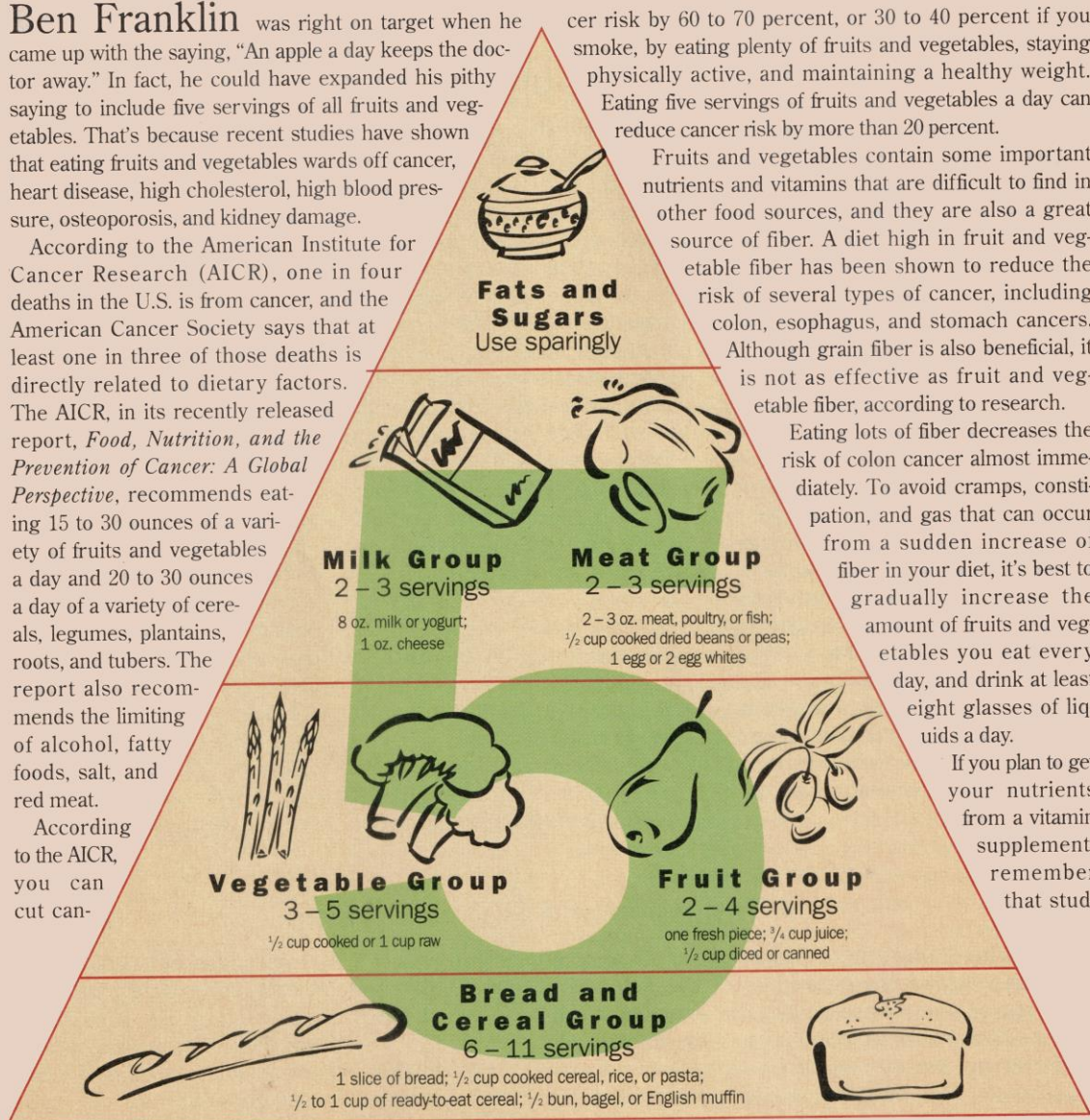
Eating five servings of fruits and vegetables a day can reduce cancer risk by more than 20 percent.

Fruits and vegetables contain some important nutrients and vitamins that are difficult to find in other food sources, and they are also a great source of fiber. A diet high in fruit and vegetable fiber has been shown to reduce the risk of several types of cancer, including colon, esophagus, and stomach cancers.

Although grain fiber is also beneficial, it is not as effective as fruit and vegetable fiber, according to research.

Eating lots of fiber decreases the risk of colon cancer almost immediately. To avoid cramps, constipation, and gas that can occur from a sudden increase of fiber in your diet, it's best to gradually increase the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat every day, and drink at least eight glasses of liquids a day.

If you plan to get your nutrients from a vitamin supplement, remember that stud-



The base levels of the pyramid are the foods to eat daily in the largest quantities, and the top levels are the foods you should eat in the smallest quantities every day.

ies have shown that vitamins are best obtained from food. Certain vitamins taken in excess can be harmful, while others taken in the wrong combination counteract each other and eliminate their effectiveness. For these reasons, it's a good idea to talk with your doctor about vitamins you may be considering and ways to add more fruits and vegetables to your everyday meals. ■

The National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics can refer you to a registered dietician in your area. Call 800-366-1655.

Water Water Everywhere

According to nutritionists, your body needs six to eight cups of fluids every day. Drinking at mealtimes helps to make chewing and swallowing easier.

To make sure that you drink that amount every day, try this tip from the American Dietetic Association: Fill a bottle with six cups of water every morning, and use this water for drinking or making beverages during the day. By the end of the day, it should be empty.

Try to drink at least two cups of fluid a day, say the experts. It's a good idea to limit the amount of caffeine you drink, because it acts as a diuretic and may prevent you from meeting your fluid needs. It also increases the amount of calcium you lose through urine.

Drink alcohol in moderation. It inhibits calcium from being absorbed into your body, it can contribute to Alzheimer's, and it can increase the risk of breast, rectal, colon, and esophagus cancers.

Drink your milk — skim is best. The reduced fat makes it a good choice for your heart and waistline, and studies suggest that drinking skim milk may also help prevent cancer. According to Johns Hopkins University, reduced fat and skim milk contain more calcium than whole milk.

High Power foods

The following foods may help to prevent Alzheimer's, cancer, cataracts, heart disease, osteoporosis, and stroke in those with high blood pressure: * bell peppers * broccoli * cantaloupe * carrots, lightly cooked * cauliflower * fresh fruits * garlic * onions, chopped or crushed * grape juice * grapes, especially red * grapefruit, especially pink * green leafy vegetables * oatmeal, shredded wheat, other whole grain cereals * olive or canola oil instead of other fats * oranges * pumpkin * salmon and other fish * squash * tomatoes * walnuts, in moderation * yogurt.

Not a comprehensive list, this guide will help you choose foods that may provide the best protection from a variety of diseases.

It Up

To liven up your fresh vegetables and increase the variety of flavors, turn to your spice rack. Try your favorite spices with your veggies, or try these ideas adapted from the American Dietetic Association:

- Basil, oregano, and Italian seasoning add an exotic flavor to vegetables, pasta, and poultry.
- A dash of nutmeg improves the flavor of carrots, winter squash, and creamed spinach.
- Dill weed or dill seed are good in potato soup, cooked cabbage, and cole slaw.
- Sage and rosemary accent poultry and stuffing dishes.
- A bay leaf simmered in soups and stews — but removed before serving as the leaf itself is not digestible — boosts flavor and aroma.
- A pinch of thyme adds flavor to peas, lima beans, and other legumes.

Veggie Magic

Find creative ways to serve the vegetables.

- Shredded zucchini or carrots can go into foods like muffins, casseroles, salads, or slaws.
- Vegetables like peas and corn go well in stews and casseroles, combining with the other flavors.
- Mixed dishes like stir-fries add more vegetables into your diet and make meat go farther.
- Beans go well in salads, soups, and other dishes and provide more energy.
- Salad dressings can be used as marinades and add zest to veggies.
- Chicken broth in place of oil or butter while cooking reduces fat and adds flavor.
- New recipes for seasonal produce are easy to find in newspapers and magazines.
- A piece of fruit or sliced fresh vegetables with lowfat dip makes a great mid-morning or afternoon snack.

For More Information

A free brochure providing information on nutrition after 50 to reduce your risk of cancer is available by sending a self-addressed envelope with 55 cents postage to the American Institute for Cancer Research, Dept. AF, P.O. Box 97167, Washington, D.C. 20090.