

Fruiting Your Family's Menu!

By Karen Hallford, MS, RD

It's sometimes hard to find fresh fruit that taste great this time of year. Many of our family's most favorite fruits are now out of season and if they are available at your local grocery store they lack flavor, quality, and a budget friendly price. But fresh fruit is not our only source. Frozen, canned, juiced and dried fruit counts too! This is an opportunity to try new varieties and forms of fruit that you may not normally worry with during the warmer months.

Any fruit or 100% fruit juice is considered a part of the fruit group. While whole fruit is a better choice than fruit juice because fruit juice does not contain fiber, fruit juice can still play a part in your family's diet if consumed in moderation- 4 to 6 ounces per day. Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits all count too. Canned fruits may have added sugars if they are canned in light or heavy syrup, so fruits canned in 100% fruit juice are better choices. Check out all the different offerings in the canned fruit isle. You may be surprised at how many healthy choices there are.

Fruit has many nutrients that our bodies need, including potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and folate. Also, fruit is naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories; and contains no cholesterol. And in addition to that, research shows that diets high in fruits and vegetables may reduce your risk of chronic disease.

Foods from the fruit group are measured in cups. One cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as 1 cup. One-half cup of dried fruit is equivalent to 1 cup. 1 small apple, 1 medium grapefruit, 1 large banana, 1 large peach, or 1 large orange also count as 1 cup. Check out the table below for daily recommendations for your kids:

Children 4-8	1 to 1 ½ cups
Girls 9-13	1 ½ cups
Girls 14-18	1 ½ cups
Boys 9-13	1 ½ cups
Boys 14-18	2 cups

Take this time to get creative with how you incorporate fruit into the diet. Try new, less familiar fruits like pomegranate juice and dried figs and plums. Dried fruits are great for snacks and lunches while frozen and canned fruits are perfect for breakfast and dinner. They can be eaten by themselves or added to recipes. Enjoy!