FRESH, VARIED AND ADAPTED TO EACH PERSON

Raw foods and cooking



More freshness at the everyday table

Fresh fruit and vegetables have a central place in my kitchen. I prioritise raw foods when they are well tolerated, to better preserve heat-sensitive nutrients.

Vitamins and enzymes worth preserving

Vitamin C. Heat can break it down, and it can leach into cooking water. Eating fresh foods without cooking them avoids these losses.*

Vitamin B1 and folate (B9). Levels can also decrease during cooking. Some may leach into the water and be lost if we discard it.*

Vitamins A, D, E and K. These are the fat-soluble vitamins. Heat can also cause losses, depending on temperature and duration. Retention varies with the vitamin, the food and the cooking method.**

Plant enzymes. Heat can cause some enzymes to lose their activity.***

In a study of **135,335 people**, eating raw vegetables was associated with lower mortality, with a stronger association than for cooked vegetables.****

* NIH · Office of Dietary Supplements · Vitamin C · NIH · Vitamin B1 and cooking · Bureau et al. · LWT - Food Science and Technology, 2015

** Lee et al., 2018 · Vitamins and cooking methods · Jakobsen and Knuthsen, 2014 · Vitamin D and cooking

*** Van Eylen et al., 2008 · Temperature and myrosinase

**** PURE study · The Lancet, 2017

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WHAT I SERVE AT HOME

Much more than a salad





Fruit and avocado. Whole or cut to suit the child's age. Avocado can also be mashed, made into a sauce or used as a spread.

Peppers, cucumber, carrots and tomatoes. Thinly sliced, grated or cut into pieces that are easy to chew.

Leafy greens. Lettuce, cultivated watercress, lamb's lettuce, spinach and endive. Wash well and vary the leaves and amounts.

Cabbage and Brussels sprouts. Very finely sliced. I sometimes let them sit with a little salt and lemon to soften; this does not replace washing or cooking when needed.*

Vegetable spaghetti. Courgette cut into strips. Also sweet potato in fine strips and small amounts, according to tolerance; if it stays hard, I cook it.

Almonds, cashews, walnuts and macadamias. Plain, unroasted and unsalted. For children under 5, finely ground or as a smooth nut butter mixed into food or spread thinly.**

Dried fruit. Raisins, prunes, dates or dried figs with no added sugar are another way to add variety. Serve small portions with meals, in a texture suitable for children.***

Always build up gradually. Mild bloating is common at first when increasing fibre. If this happens, reduce the amount, then increase it gradually according to tolerance. Grate or finely chop foods and alternate with cooked vegetables when needed.****

* FDA · Safe produce preparation

** NHS · Nuts and textures for children

*** NHS · Dried fruit and dental health

**** MedlinePlus · Fibre and digestive adjustment

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PREPARING AND STORING THEM WELL

Sprouts and fermented foods





Sprouting changes the seed and can increase some vitamins. The result depends on the seed and how it is prepared; for example, increases in vitamin B1 have been observed in sprouted lentils.*

Sprouts: step by step

Before you start. Use seeds sold for food sprouting, clean hands and a thoroughly washed sprouting container. Rinse with drinking-quality water.**

While they sprout. Follow the seed instructions. Rinse with fresh water at least twice a day and drain well; do not reuse the water.**

As soon as they are ready. Refrigerate straight away at 4 °C or below and eat them soon.**

Look and smell. Discard sprouts that are slimy, dark, mouldy or unpleasant-smelling. A normal smell does not guarantee they are free of bacteria.** ***

For children, serve sprouts thoroughly cooked.***

Fermented foods

Start with small amounts and increase according to tolerance. If making them at home, follow a tested recipe with its specified salt quantities, timings and storage instructions.******

* Avezum et al. · Food Chemistry, 2024

** Government of Québec · Sprouting and hygiene · Health Canada · Storing sprouts

*** FDA · Safe produce preparation

**** NCHFP · Safe home fermentation

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COOK ONLY AS MUCH AS NEEDED

Careful cooking



For many vegetables, I choose brief steaming

Use a steamer without submerging the vegetables. Cover, check the texture and remove them when tender. Less contact with water and an appropriate cooking time can reduce losses of some vitamins.*

Broccoli and firm vegetables: cook until comfortably chewable. Check during cooking so they do not stay on the heat longer than necessary.

After steaming, a brief sauté

For a little extra flavour, you can briefly sauté vegetables after steaming. See the oils and fats guide to choose what to sauté with.

Cooking liquid counts too

In a soup, you keep some of the nutrients that leached into the water. This does not restore vitamins lost through heat. In the oven or a pan, avoid burning food.*

Potatoes and dried beans need proper cooking. For beans: soak for 6 to 12 hours, discard the water and boil in fresh water for at least 30 minutes; continue until tender. Sprouting or brief steaming does not replace this boiling.**

For the family: adapt cuts and textures, respect allergies and offer variety. More fresh food should go hand in hand with a diet that also meets energy and protein needs.

* NIH · Office of Dietary Supplements · Vitamin C · Bureau et al. · LWT - Food Science and Technology, 2015 · AESAN · Acrylamide and food browning

** EFSA · Lectins and preparing beans, 2026

HealMe educational material. Does not replace an individual medical or nutritional assessment.

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