



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Enlist fruits, veggies for good health

*By Chris Halagarda,*

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**FORT LEE, Va.** – When it comes to healthy food recommendations, it's sometimes tough to not sound restrictive by saying "avoid this" or "limit that." The truth is we need to focus more on what to add to our diets to maintain a healthy weight and improve or maintain good health just as much as looking at what to reduce.

One positive strategy I always encourage is for clients to ensure they include a piece of fruit and a serving of vegetables with every meal. This simple strategy not only makes obtaining daily fruit and vegetable goals a cinch, it also helps improve a feeling of fullness.

If we feel full from low-calorie fruits and vegetables, we will eat less and have an easier time maintaining healthy weight. By eating more fruits and vegetables, we'll increase the fiber in our diet, which can also aid in providing a feeling of fullness.

Fruits and vegetables are also very high in water content, which will help us stay hydrated and ultimately give us more energy, especially if we're dehydrated. Staying hydrated is very important, even in winter, when cool weather deceives us into thinking we need less fluid.

Fruits and vegetables are also superior to almost any other class of foods in vitamins and minerals. Potassium, which is a mineral responsible for regulating fluid balance in the cells, has also been shown to help reduce the risk high blood pressure and stroke.

So be creative and ambitious with your quest to add a fruit and vegetable to every meal of the day and aim for a minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, but don't stop there! That's just a minimum. Here are a few more suggestions:

- Cook your morning oatmeal with blueberries and peanut butter. Add a pinch of cinnamon for more flavor.
- Slice strawberries or bananas over your dry cereal and top with low-fat milk. Don't think cereal is for only breakfast. Low-sugar cereals found in your commissary make great snacks any time.
- Pack oranges and bananas for snacks. Add a handful of almonds for a perfect snack.
- Pack nutritious workday snacks such as dried fruits, baby carrots, grapes or celery sticks with a low-fat dip.
- Skip the traditional high-fat, high-sugar dessert 90 percent of the time. If you need something, replace it with a fruit cocktail or baked apple with cinnamon.
- Use the slow cooker that you've "been meaning to use" to whip up a chili recipe. Add plenty of beans, broccoli, mushrooms, peppers, tomatoes, cauliflower and onions.
- Whip up vegetable soup for cold winter lunches.
- Don't rely on the local sandwich shop for your vegetable-filled sandwiches. Make your own as many days a week as possible. Add every vegetable that you like, and serve the leftover vegetables as a salad.
- Keep chopped-up vegetables and a low-fat dip available for nighttime munchies. Most of the time, we're not even hungry when we're snacking after dinner, so make it mandatory to eat vegetables as an evening snack.

For more information on fruits and vegetables visit:

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov>.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

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**About DeCA:** *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth more than \$4,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*