



# Ask the Dietitian

## *fresh raw produce*

***I have heard that only fresh, raw produce is the best to eat for nutritional value and that cooking vegetables, especially in the microwave, destroys all the vitamins and minerals. Is this true?***

This is a common myth that is very pervasive through out our country. In fact, there are several nutrients, such as the antioxidant family of carotenoids (i.e. beta-carotene and lycopene), which are more available for absorption when the produce is cooked than when it is eaten raw. However the way you cook your produce can affect how much nutritional value is left when you eat it.

Certain nutrients like fiber cannot be destroyed by any method of cooking, but other more fragile nutrients like the B vitamins and vitamin C can be reduced in potency if the produce item is cooked for too long or boiled in water. A recent study in the Journal of Food Science found that boiling in water and pressure cooking lead to the greatest vitamin and mineral losses, while microwaving and griddling (cooking on a flat metal surface with little or no oil) provides the best nutrient retention when cooking produce. The reason microwaving and griddling retain the most nutrient value in produce is related to the relatively short cooking time and lack of excess water in these cooking methods. Cooking produce in water – such as boiling or pressure cooking - can leach out necessary vitamins and minerals, but won't render the produce item useless as the fiber is still in tact as will be several of the vitamins and minerals. Read more about this study here: <http://www.ift.org/cms/?pid=1001999&printable=1>

The main thing to keep in mind is that fruits and vegetables are required for good human health. So prepare your produce the way that is the tastiest to you and be sure to eat 5 cups of produce each and every day. Planning on consuming at least 1-2 cups of fruits and/or veggies at breakfast, lunch, dinner and even snacks will help you meet this goal.

For ideas of how you can meet your produce goals, check out the Heart Center of the Rockies Tips for Sneaking in More Fruits and Vegetables handout or call one of our registered dietitians at (970) 221-1000 to schedule an appointment. We can help you determine your dietary needs based on your age, health, activity level, and health goals.

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**For further information please call our office and ask to speak to one of our Registered Dietitians**

Fort Collins, Estes Park and Sterling (970) 221-1000, Loveland (970) 624-1800, Fort Morgan (970) 867-7900

Toll free (800) 459-4241, or visit [www.heartcenteroftherockies.com](http://www.heartcenteroftherockies.com)

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