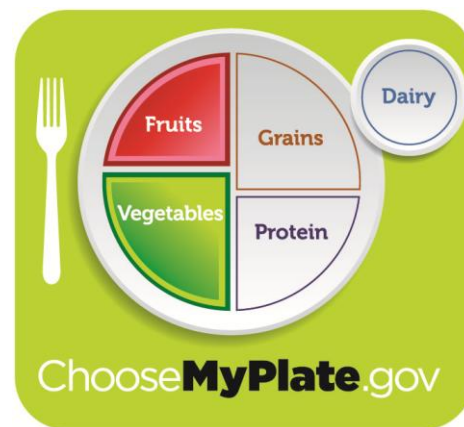


Fruits and vegetables are incredibly important for our health! The Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourage us to fill half of our plate with fruits and vegetables. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables in an array of colors increases the types of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals that you feed your body.

Phytochemicals are compounds produced by plants that affect health. The color of the produce is in part determined by the type of phytochemical it contains. They are a relatively new discovery, and have varying, positive effects on the body. Eating a variety of colors has been shown to reduce the risk for chronic illnesses, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and more.

Phytochemicals sample- color guide for some fruit and vegetables



Color	Phytochemical	Examples	Functions
Orange/yellow	Beta-carotene	Sweet potatoes, winter squash, apricots, cantaloupe, carrots	Converted to Vitamin A, important for vision, reduces risk of heart disease and cancer, improves immune function
Red	Lycopene	Tomatoes, watermelon, pink grapefruit	Antioxidant, reduces risk of heart disease and cancer
Blue/Purple	Anthocyanin	Blueberries, grapes, prunes	Powerful antioxidant, protects cells from damage, positive effect on blood vessel health
Green	Chlorophyll	Spinach, green beans, parsley	Antioxidant, binds to and inhibits absorption of cancer causing substances
White	Anthoxanthins	Garlic, onions	Reduces risk of heart disease and cancer

**What determines the amount of phytochemicals, vitamins or minerals in a fruit or vegetable?** Many things can impact the amount of nutrients in a fruit or vegetable. The environment in which it is grown plays a role, including soil quality, altitude, climate, temperature, and processing techniques. Transit time can affect the amount of nutrients in the produce- the longer it must travel, the more likely it will lose some of its nutrients. Nutrients are found in all edible portions of the plant, though they are frequently found in higher concentrations in the skin.

**Do we absorb all of the nutrients that are in the fruits and vegetables?** The bioavailability, or the ability of the body to absorb the nutrients, is based on several factors. Fat-soluble vitamins need a fat source to help their absorption, such as olive oil. Water-soluble vitamins are absorbed relatively easily. Preparation methods, like chopping, pureeing, and cooking of the produce also affect the bioavailability of the nutrients.

**Is it better to take a dietary supplement or eat the whole food?** Research shows supplements of isolated nutrients have less of a positive effect on preventative health than eating the whole fruit or vegetable. It is more beneficial to eat the whole food, as everything within the fruit and vegetable works together to provide the health benefit. However, there are times where high doses of specific vitamins are required, especially when a person is deficient in a specific nutrient.

Summertime is a great time to take advantage of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. The Farmer's Markets are in full swing, which provides a great opportunity to purchase delicious, nutrient-rich produce in a fun setting. Another way to get produce in the summer is by purchasing a CSA share from a local farmer or non-profit organization. Check out [Minnesotagrown.com](http://Minnesotagrown.com) to find a Farmer's Market or CSA option near you. Try the recipes below with your fresh produce!

### **Summer Squash Parmesan Skillet**

#### **Ingredients**

3 large summer squash (about 2#)  
3 green peppers  
Garlic powder- to taste  
Black pepper- to taste  
Dried oregano leaves- to taste  
Dried basil leaves- to taste  
4 medium sized tomatoes- cored and thinly sliced  
2 cans (14 ½ oz) Italian flavored diced tomatoes  
2 cups shredded Italian-blended cheeses  
¼ cup Parmesan Cheese  
1 # whole wheat spaghetti

#### **Directions**

1. Heat oven to 400°F. Cut squash diagonally into ¼ inch slices. Cut green pepper into strips. Coat 2 baking sheets with cooking spray. Place summer squash and green pepper on pan. Coat again with cooking spray and season with garlic powder, black pepper, dried oregano, dried basil.
2. Season sliced tomatoes with garlic powder, black pepper, dried oregano, and dried basil.
3. Put 1 can of Italian-flavored diced tomatoes on bottom of skillet, layer with half the squash, ½ the green peppers, ½ of the tomato and ½ cheese. Repeat layering. Top with Parmesan Cheese.
4. Cover and simmer 20 minutes over medium heat.
5. Serve over spaghetti.

### **Zucchini Bread**

#### **Ingredients**

2 cups grated zucchini  
1 cup oil (canola or coconut)  
3 eggs  
2 tsp vanilla  
3 cups flour  
2 cups sugar (or Truvia)  
1 tsp baking soda  
¼ tsp baking powder  
1 tsp salt  
1 tsp cinnamon  
1 cup chopped nuts  
½ bag mini chocolate chips

#### **Directions**

1. Mix zucchini, oil, eggs and vanilla in a bowl. Mix dry ingredients in a separate bowl.
2. Combine the wet ingredients with the dry until combined.
3. Spread in 2 greased loaf pans.
4. Bake at 350°F for 45-60 minutes.

### **Do you have nutrition questions?**

I am Gwenda Hill, the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist at North Clinic. I am here to help you reach your nutrition goals. My background includes working with men, women and children focusing on a variety of nutritional concerns. I can help with sustainable weight loss solutions, and healthy eating for a variety of health conditions, including: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, prediabetes, GI problems, and child nutrition concerns. If you would like an appointment to discuss any of the issues listed above or any other nutritional concerns, please ask your provider to submit a referral to the Nutritionist.