

# Don't Throw Vitamins Down the Drain

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**F**ruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. The vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of cancer, improve signs of aging, promote bone health, and boost memory.



Fruits and vegetables can be enjoyed in their raw form, cooked, or canned. However, when cooked improperly, many vitamins can be lost. Water-soluble vitamins such as B vitamins and Vitamin C can be leached into cooking water and discarded. Prolonged heat, light, and air may also destroy sensitive vitamins.

## To preserve vitamins in produce try the following:

- Cook foods in the shortest amount of time possible. Vegetables should be tender-crisp, not soft and limp.
- Microwave, steam, and/or stir-fry vegetables. These cooking methods are quick which helps retain vitamins.
- Cook vegetables and fruits in a covered pot to prevent nutrients from escaping in the steam.
- Cook fruits and vegetables for the shortest possible time.
- Wash all produce thoroughly, but avoid soaking; nutrients can be lost in the water.
- Cook vegetables whole and unpeeled whenever possible.
- Cut vegetables with long cooking times into large pieces. With less surfaces exposed, fewer vitamins are lost.
- Leave edible skins on fruits and vegetables when possible. Many vitamins and minerals are found in the outer leaves, skin, and area just below the skin.
- Cook foods as close to serving time as possible.
- When boiling vegetables, use as little water as possible.
- To cut down on cooking time, place vegetables in water that is at a full boil.
- Instead of wasting nutrients that have leached away during cooking, save the water and use in soups, stews, gravies, and sauces.
- Avoid deep fat frying. The high temperatures of frying will destroy heat sensitive vitamins.
- Cook vegetables without adding baking soda. Although baking soda keeps vegetables looking greener, it destroys valuable vitamins.

