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NUTRITION BREAK

Focus on fruit during winter months

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Combine strawberries, blueberries, grapes, pineapple chunks and yogurt for a tasty fruit salad. Photo courtesy of Oregon State Food Hero website

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It's wintertime in Nebraska. Despite the recent burst of warm weather, we still have a long way to go before we can enjoy the fresh garden produce of summer.

I know I eat less fruit during the winter when less is in-season. That's not good considering eating fruit provides so many health benefits.

People who eat more fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Fruits provide nutrients vital for health and maintenance of your body, such as potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C and folate (folic acid). Most fruits are naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen or dried, and may be whole, cut-up or pureed.

Here are few quick tips on making sure you are getting enough fruit:

Try fruit at breakfast. At breakfast, top your cereal with bananas, peaches, or strawberries; add blueberries to pancakes; drink 100% orange or grapefruit juice. Or, try a fruit mixed with low-fat or fat free yogurt.

Try fruit at lunch. At lunch, pack a tangerine, banana, or grapes to eat, or choose fruits from a salad bar. Individual containers of fruits like peaches or applesauce are easy and convenient.

Try fruit at dinner, too. At dinner, add crushed pineapple to coleslaw, or include mandarin oranges or grapes in a tossed salad.

Snack on fruits. Dried fruits make great snacks. They are easy to carry and store well.

Keep fruits safe. Wash fruits before preparing or eating them. Under clean, running water, rub fruits briskly with your hands to remove dirt and surface microorganisms. Dry after washing.

Keep visible reminders. Keep a bowl of whole fruit on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator.

Think about taste. Buy fresh fruits in season when they may be less expensive and at their peak flavor. Add fruits for a sweet effect in a recipe.

Think about variety. Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or juice) as well as fresh, so that you always have a supply on hand.

Don't forget the fiber. Make most of your choices whole or cut-up fruit rather than juice, for the benefits that dietary fiber provides.

Be a good role model. Set a good example for children by eating fruit every day with meals or as snacks. Here is a great easy recipe that both kids and adults will enjoy.

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Fruit Salad

- 2 cups strawberries
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup grapes
- 1 can (8 ounces) pineapple chunks
- 6 ounces fat free lemon yogurt

Drain juice from pineapple. Cut grapes and strawberries into halves. Combine strawberries, blueberries, grapes and pineapple chunks in a large bowl.

Drizzle yogurt over fruit. Toss lightly to coat. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Makes 10 servings (1/2 cup each).

Nutritional information per serving: 50 calories, 0 g fat, 15 mg sodium, 12 g carbohydrate and 1 g fiber.

Recipe from: **Oregon State Food Hero website**

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