

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

Citrus Fruits and Vitamin C

When shopping for fruit, do you ever ask yourself, “How will this improve the health of the children in my care?” Fruits, especially citrus fruits, contain water-soluble vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid. Our bodies need vitamin C to produce the protein substance collagen, which is the foundation of the connective tissues that hold our body structure together.



Benefits of Vitamin C

- Promotes wound and bone healing
- Promotes healthy gums and teeth
- Helps with iron absorption
- Promotes a strong immune system and resistance to infection

Daily Recommended Intakes (DRI) for Vitamin C	
Age of Child	DRI
1-3	15 mg
4-8	25 mg

More about Citrus Fruits & Vitamin C

Citrus is a term for fruits that grow on trees with an outer skin that must be peeled. These fruits normally come in shades of yellow, orange, or green, and can be sweet, like oranges, or sour, like lemons. When available, choose whole fruits over fruit juice because whole fruits provide the body with fiber, which also promotes good health through regulation of the digestive system.



Because vitamin C is water-soluble, it is sensitive to most cooking processes. Cooking methods using water or heat decrease the availability of vitamin C in food. Eating citrus in its raw form provides the highest concentration of vitamin C per serving. Prolonged exposure to air also decreases availability of vitamin C, so try not to cut or peel citrus fruit too far in advance, and always store it in an airtight container.

Tips for Introducing New Fruits

- Make it a goal to introduce one new fruit each month.
- Keep a bowl of clean fruit on the table.
- Pick brightly colored, appealing fruit.
- Introduce the new fruit along with an activity.

Fun Fruit Activities



1. Snack Time Squeeze

Do an activity to show your children how juice is made!

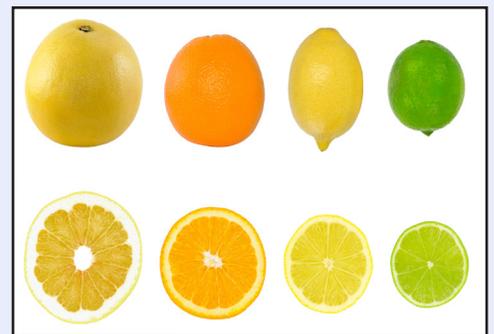
- Set up plastic containers with one orange for each child.
- Have children roll the oranges back and forth on the table to loosen the peel.
- Cut the oranges in half and give them to the children to squeeze into the plastic containers.
- Enjoy some freshly squeezed orange juice, while teaching your kids about fruit and developing healthy habits!

*Don't forget to measure the juice before enjoying, ensuring you follow current meal pattern guidelines.

2. Guess that Citrus

A fun family activity to see how well your kids know their citrus fruits!

- Cut up small slices of various citrus fruits, including oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruits, and place them on separate plates with paper towels over top.
- Have your children close their eyes and try each citrus fruit and describe each of them. Is it sweet? Sour? Both?
- When they are done, switch roles, and let your kids watch you try each citrus fruit!
- Talk about which one everyone liked best and how you can add them into family meals.



References

United States Department of Agriculture. (2017). *10 Tips: Focus on fruits*. Retrieved from <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/focus-on-fruits>

United States Department of Health and Human Services and United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Dietary guidelines 2015-2020, key elements of healthy eating patterns*. Retrieved from <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/chapter-1/>

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