

Summer and fall are ideal times to promote produce consumption because of the abundant fresh vegetables and fruits. The benefits — vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals — have long been touted by nutrition experts and used by health promoters to inspire clients. But there's increasing evidence to support produce consumption for its weight management benefit, regardless of overall calorie intake.

An *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* study highlighted results from a year-long intervention comparing a reduced-fat diet to a reduced-fat/**increased water-rich fruits and vegetables** diet. The 2 groups of randomly assigned subjects were counseled on their respective diets without considering calories.

After 1 year, both groups had lost weight — 14 pounds average for the reduced-fat diet, 17 pounds average for the increased-produce diet. The real benefit, however, was discovered when examining food diaries. The increased produce group ate a greater volume of food by weight and reported less hunger, suggesting more likelihood of maintaining their healthier eating patterns.

Try these ideas to eat more fruit and veggies this summer:

- **Smoothie Happy Hour:** Sponsor a happy hour party featuring healthy fruit/vegetable beverage concoctions. Work with your friends, cafeteria or local caterer to blend tasty combinations of pulp juices, low-fat yogurts, and nutraceuticals (bee pollen, soy powder, etc.).
- **Fruit and Vegetable Stand:** Set up a temporary stand in the cafeteria or break room where people can stop by to purchase (or sample) fresh single servings of familiar and exotic fruits and vegetables.
- **Master Gardener Lecture:** Invite a local gardening expert to discuss growing fruits and vegetables. Follow up in a couple months with a contest to see who's grown the most perfect specimen, largest, oddest, etc.
- **People's Choice Awards:** Sponsor a fruit and vegetable cooking contest/taste test. Give prizes such as cooking utensils, blenders, cookbooks, and shopping spree at a local produce store.
- **Can Do:** Invite a registered dietitian or home economist to offer a presentation on canning and freezing fruits and vegetables.
- **Juice It or Lose It:** Hold a random drawing to award a juicer for signing up or completing a program, or for participating in your current service.
- **Vegetate:** Supply a TV and vegetables in conference or break rooms. Invite participants to take their breaks and "vegetate" (eat vegetables while watching).
- **Fruit Fairy:** Use your staff or health promotion volunteers to distribute a piece of fresh fruit to participants, along with a personal invitation from the fruit fairy.
- **VegTABLES:** Set up tables loaded with veggies at various work locations. Post or email the locations; include a handout and recipe.
- **Sorbet Today:** Provide fruit sorbet for free once a week in lunchrooms or the cafeteria.