



## HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

# OFFICE ON AGING

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### Looking to Stay Healthier Longer? Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

By: Erin Ulibarri, MPH, CHES

What do peaches, strawberries, summer squash, tomatoes, cherries, corn-on-the-cob, and melons have in common? They are all in season during the summer. The next time you go to the grocery store or local farmers' market, notice all the different colors of fruits and vegetables that are available.

This is a great opportunity for you to try a new food or cook a recipe that you've wanted to make. Fruits and vegetables, especially ones picked that day, are loaded with vitamins and minerals that help your body function at its best. Most people think that oranges are the best source of Vitamin C, but did you know that a guava has almost three times and a kiwi fruit has about double the amount of Vitamin C than an orange? Summer is a perfect time to sample new types of produce.

Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables makes sure that you are getting everything that your body needs, especially fiber, vitamins A, B, C, E, and K, folate, calcium, potassium, zinc, lycopene, and flavonols. These building blocks to good health help your heart beat correctly, lower your chances to develop cancer, help you to see well, may slow the aging process, keep your skin glowing, and fight Alzheimer's Disease.

The goal is to eat 5 to 9 servings a day. Eat an apple as an afternoon snack, use spinach instead of iceberg lettuce in a salad, put some blueberries in your cereal or oatmeal, make a peach pie, or grill up some corn-on-the-cob. Eat as many fruits and vegetables as you like each day, but make sure you are still eating many different types. In some cases, you can get too much of a good thing and eat more of one vitamin or mineral than you need. It is true – you can turn orange from eating too many carrots.

The County of Orange Office on Aging can help you reach this nutrition goal. Call **1-800-510-2020** or **1-714-567-7500** and ask the Office on Aging's Information Specialists for a nutrition packet with handouts entitled "Super Foods", "Cooking for One or Two", and "How to Plan Meals that are Balanced and Varied." The Office on Aging also has a limited number of farmers' market vouchers. Each booklet contains \$20 worth of coupons to be used at an Orange County certified farmers' market to pay for fruits, vegetables, and edible herbs. Eligibility requires being: 1) at least 60 years of age; 2) low-income; and 3) able to pick up the vouchers from the Office on Aging in Santa Ana. Call now to get your nutrition packet and farmers' market voucher before the summer is gone and many fruits and vegetables are no longer at their peak.

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