

Healthy Measures: Is fresh *really* best?

March is Nutrition Month! This year's theme is *Celebrate food...from field to table!* During March, the Healthy Measures E-bulletin is featuring topics related to this theme. Today's topic is on fresh versus processed foods.

We often hear the phrase, "Fresh is best". But purchasing fresh foods may not always be practical, affordable or necessary. Foods can be processed to make them safe to eat after travelling long distances. It also makes certain foods available to us that would otherwise only be available during their peak growing season.

Are fresh vegetables and fruit more nutritious than canned or frozen?

Not necessarily. Some fresh vegetables and fruit that travel long distances are often picked well before their nutrient content has peaked. In contrast, vegetables and fruit picked for canning and freezing are harvested and packed at their peak of ripeness, making them more nutritious than produce that was picked before it was ripe.

There are many factors that influence the nutrient content of produce, including the crop variety, growing conditions, ripeness, storage, processing, handling and transport. You can maximize the nutritional value of your produce by storing it properly. Check if your vegetables or fruit should be stored in the fridge or at room temperature. Some vegetables, such as green beans, can lose up to a quarter of their vitamin C content when stored at room temperature for 24 hours.

Are canned vegetables and fruit high in sodium (salt) or sugar?

Many canned vegetables and fruit have salt or sugar added to them. You can reduce the amount of salt and sugar by rinsing these products prior to consuming them. Frozen vegetables and fruit; however, are often preserved without added salt or sugar. Read the food label, including the Ingredient List and the Nutrition Facts Table to assist in choosing products that have the least amount of salt or sugar.

Remember, whether it's fresh, frozen or canned, the most important thing is to aim for a minimum of seven serving of vegetables and fruit per day, as indicated by [Canada's Food Guide](#).

**For more information:
Dietitians of Canada**

Do you have questions on nutrition and healthy eating? Contact *EatRight Ontario* at 1-877-510-5102 to speak to a Registered Dietitian.

Healthy Measures: Eat Well, Be Active and Be Yourself!