

## Fruit and veggie do's and don'ts

Here are a few other things to keep in mind when planning your menu:

- **Go light on the starchy vegetables.** If you choose sweet potatoes as a side dish, use that as your starch even though it's technically a vegetable. Don't have sweet potatoes *and* corn, which is also a starch. Pick some other veggie that's higher in fiber.
- **Veggie preparation matters.** Fresh is best, but if you do cook vegetables, use a lighter preparation. Don't use a lot of oil, or fry or sauté them. Steaming or grilling is better. And be aware that if you boil vegetables, you lose a lot of the health benefits. The nutrients leach out. So, when you pour out the water, you're also pouring out the nutrients.
- **Don't drown fruits and veggies in heavy sauces, dips or toppings,** especially if you're watching your weight. Try sprinkling apple slices with cinnamon instead of smothering them with peanut butter or caramel. And dunk those carrot sticks in fat-free yogurt instead of ranch dip. If you must have sauces or dips, look for lighter recipes or limit the amount you eat to a few tablespoons.
- **Eat with the seasons.** Choose fresh fruits and vegetables that are "in season" to ensure you're eating a good variety of colors throughout the year. For instance, add squashes, root vegetables and different types of apples to your fall menu.
- **If you can't get fresh fruits and veggies, frozen is fine.** Avoid eating a lot of canned vegetables because they tend to have more sodium. And choose canned fruit that's packed in water or natural juice, not sugary syrup.
- **If you like dried fruits, eat them in moderation.** They tend to have a higher concentration of calories and sugar than their fresh counterparts. A serving size of dried fruit should be no more than one-fourth of a cup.

- **If you're counting calories, buy smaller pieces of fruit.** Large bananas can be almost 200 calories, so pick smaller ones. Apples, nectarines, peaches, and other round fruits should be roughly the size of a tennis ball. For bite-sized fruits, such as grapes and cherries, one serving equals approximately 17 pieces.

With so many vegetables and fruits to choose from, and with so many ways to enjoy them, you'll find it's easy to create a "colorful" diet that's satisfying, nutritious and delicious.