

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Oneida County Urging Residents to Eat Their Fruits and Veggies for Better Health Fresh, Seasonal Options Available Locally

Turns out mom was right about eating your fruits and veggies, and this month, designated Fruit and Vegetable Month, Oneida County residents are urged to eat smart and add more color to their plate.

“Eating a diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, not only tastes good, but has been linked to improved health,” said Director of Health Phyllis D. Ellis, BSN, MS, F.A.C.H.E. “Fruits and veggies are loaded with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants, which have been shown to help control weight and reduce blood pressure, as well as reduce the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer.”

While the USDA’s recommendation is to fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables for every meal and snack, according to a recent New York State Department of Health Survey, a full one-third of Oneida County residents admit they don’t eat vegetables or fruit on a daily basis.

According to the dietary guidelines, an adult consuming 2,000 calories per day should be eating 2 1/2 cups of vegetables and two cups of fruit per day.

“We urge everyone to eat more colors because a variety of fruits and veggies provide the most beneficial range of nutrients,” said Ellis. “They are considered a super food because they typically contain no trans fats, low saturated fat and very little or no sodium. They can be eaten raw or cooked, they fill you up and can provide a nice energy boost.”

With farmers’ market season in full swing, Oneida County residents have several options for accessible fresh produce. The Oneida County Public Market just resumed its expanded summer hours, open every Saturday from 9 am-1 pm. Located in the REA wing at Union Station, what was previously considered a food desert in downtown Utica, the market accepts Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food benefits.

A full list of farmers’ markets in Oneida County can be found on the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County website at: <http://cceoneida.com/agriculture/buy-local/farmers-markets>.

Through its Creating Healthy Schools and Communities program, Oneida County is working on other nutrition initiatives including making healthier foods more accessible and visible in small and independent markets, especially in underserved areas; connecting local farmers and area worksites through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, allowing farmers to bring their produce during growing season directly to employees at their workplace; and, assisting community organizations and businesses to create healthy food guidelines and choices.

Through the county’s own Wellness Program, Oneida County employees are sponsoring three planter boxes of vegetables at the County Office Building this season. The harvest will be distributed weekly to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants from July through October.

For easy tips on how to incorporate more fruit and vegetables in your diet, visit the American Heart Association link: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/add-color/how-to-eat-more-fruits-and-vegetables>.