Most vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories. None have cholesterol. Eating a diet rich in vegetables as part of an overall healthful diet may reduce the risk of stroke and coronary artery diseases; diabetes; certain cancers (such as mouth, stomach, and colorectal cancer); weight gain by lowering overall calorie intake; and low bone mass, as vegetables contain many nutrients important to bone health, particularly the vitamin K found in green leafy vegetables.

In addition, potassium-rich vegetables may reduce the risk of developing kidney stones and may help decrease bone loss.

Higher potassium vegetables include sweet potatoes, white potatoes, white beans, tomato products (paste, sauce, and juice), beet greens, soybeans, lima beans, winter squash, spinach, lentils, kidney beans, and split peas.

Having adequate folate in your diet helps in heart health. Vegetables high in folate include beans, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, romaine lettuce, and tomato juice.

### What Counts as a Vegetable?
Any vegetable or 100 percent vegetable juice counts as a member of the vegetable group. Vegetables count toward your daily intake in fresh, frozen, canned, cooked, or dried/dehydrated form. Try them chopped, sliced, or mashed.

Vegetables are organized into five subgroups based on their nutrient content:

- dark green (e.g., broccoli and spinach)
- red and orange (e.g., carrots and squashes)
- starchy (e.g., potatoes)
- legumes (beans and peas)
- “other” (e.g., green beans, beets)

A healthy eating pattern includes a variety of vegetables from all subgroups.

### Tips for Increasing Vegetable Intake
Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy microwave steaming. Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables in a see-through container in the refrigerator. Carrot and celery sticks are traditional. Try broccoli, cucumber slices, or red or green pepper strips.

Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare. Pick up bags of prewashed salad greens and add baby carrots or grape tomatoes for a salad in minutes.

Plan some meals around a vegetable main dish, such as a stir-fry or soup. Add veggies to dishes you already prepare, such as casseroles or lasagna.

### What Counts as a Cup?
In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered 1 cup from the vegetable group.
Examine Your Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>What I do now</th>
<th>What I plan to buy/change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example:</td>
<td>Eat little variety, mostly</td>
<td>Purchase fresh vegetables in season or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>potatoes or corn</td>
<td>frozen; try a new vegetable at lunch and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dinner</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

My Goal:


Butternut and Ginger Soup

Preparation time: 1 hour  
Servings: 6  
Fruits and vegetables per person: 1 cup

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 tsp mild olive oil  
- 1½ cups chopped onion  
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed  
- 2 tsp chopped fresh ginger  
- 1½ lbs (6 cups) peeled raw butternut or other winter squash  
- ½ lb (1 cup) new potatoes, peeled and chopped  
- 1 cup unsweetened 100 percent apple juice  
- 3 cups water  
- ½ cup skim milk  
- ½ tsp salt

**GARNISH**

- ½ cup chopped Granny Smith apple  
- 2 Tbsp chopped parsley

**DIRECTIONS**

Heat the oil in a high-sided skillet or large saucepan on medium high. Sauté the onions 3 minutes or until tender. Add the garlic and ginger and cook 1 minute longer. Add the squash, potatoes, 100 percent apple juice, and water or broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer 35 to 40 minutes or until very soft. Puree in a blender or processor, in batches, until smooth. Pour back into the pan and stir in the milk and salt. Reheat and serve topped with chopped apple and parsley.