

Carotenoid (Vitamin A) Food Sources: Fruits and Vegetables "Best Buys"



Fruits and vegetables have much flavor and nutrition. Eating them promotes good health and decreases risk for many chronic diseases, including cancer. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is recommended because they provide vitamins, minerals, fiber and other natural substances, such as antioxidants and phytochemicals, that are important for good health.

Carotenoids are antioxidants. Beta carotene is converted in the body into vitamin A, which is needed for healthy eyes, bones, teeth, skin, mucous membrane tissues and hair.

Try to eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day, with at least one serving per day being vitamin A-rich, vitamin C-rich and fiber-rich. In addition, eat several servings per week of cruciferous (cabbage-family) vegetables.

One way to stretch the value of your food dollar is to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in season. The following information shows an alphabetical listing of fruits and vegetables that are good sources of carotenoids (vitamin A). The "best time to buy" lets you know when to buy those fruits and vegetables for the best quality at their lowest cost.

Fruits and Vegetables that are good sources of Carotenoids (vitamin A):	Best time to Buy Fresh
apricots	June, July
avocado	January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, November, December
broccoli	February, March, April, July, August, September, October, November
cantaloupe	June, July, August, September
carrots	
elderberries	April, May, June, July, August
greens (beet greens, chickory greens, collards, dandelion greens, kale, lambsquarters, mustard greens, pokeberry shoots, purslane, Swiss chard, turnip greens, watercress)	
mango	June, July
nectarines	June, July, August
papaya	
pumpkin	October, November
red bell peppers	July, August, September
romine lettuce	
spinach	March, April, May
sweet potato	October, November, December
tomato	May, June, July, August, September
winter squash (acorn, butternut, hubbard)	September, October, November, December

Originally published as a Timely Topic in August, 1999, by Mary Meck Higgins, Ph.D., R.D., L.D. Extension Specialist, Human Nutrition, Kansas State University, Department of Human Nutrition

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, Kansas

All educational programs and materials available without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.