



Munch More Leafy Greens

CHALLENGE

Add more leafy-green vegetables to your diet

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Eat More Leafy Greens."
2. Eat leafy-green vegetables on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



What Are Leafy Greens?

Quick! Name a leafy green. You know, the healthy, plant-based foods packed with vitamins and nutrients that protect your health and prevent disease.¹ There are many, like broccoli, kale, and cabbage. And then there's spinach. The next time you grab a bag of these leafy greens at the grocery store, think about this:

There's a place called Crystal City, Texas, near San Antonio. It's a place where muscle and brawn have been part of the culture ever since the railroad came to town. Once

investors got a glimpse of the Lone Star state's wide open spaces, they bought thousands of acres of land. But it wasn't to raise Longhorn cattle. They bought land to grow spinach.

Lots of it. And for more than 80 years, Crystal City has been known as the Spinach Capital of the World. The town boasts two larger-than-life statues of the spinach-loving Popeye cartoon character. Every year, the town hosts a festival to crown a Spinach Queen. And the event always includes a crazy list of spinach-made appetizers, salads, soups, drinks, and desserts to sample.

Fortunately, you don't have to take a trip to Texas to get your leafy greens. But if you're like most people, you should eat more of them. So drive to a local farmer's market or the corner market, and buy more leafy greens. Take the month-long health challenge to *Munch More Leafy Greens*.

How much do you know about the health benefits of leafy-green plant foods?

T F

1. A serving of kale contains more calcium than a serving of milk and more vitamin C than an orange.
2. Antioxidants in leafy green vegetables help prevent disease and certain types of cancer.
3. Eating leafy greens with healthy fats helps your body absorb more nutrients. (Healthy fats include olive oil, canola oil, low-fat salad dressing.)
4. You should eat 2 to 3 cups or more of vegetables daily. About 10 to 15 percent of the vegetables you eat should be leafy greens.
5. Leafy greens are a rich source of vitamin K, needed for blood clotting and healthy bones.



Did you get all of them right? If not, you could benefit from learning more about leafy greens. Dark leafy green vegetables like spinach, kale, and broccoli contain vitamins and nutrients your body needs for good health.

1. True. 2. True. 3. True. 4. True. 5. True.

Health Benefits of Leafy Greens

It would be pretty cool if you could eat a mouthful of spinach like Popeye and suddenly feel strong and full of energy. Most people would probably eat more if it did. Going green won't give you an instant energy boost. But making leafy greens a regular part of your diet will improve your long-term health. You will feel better over time. Studies show that eating leafy greens and other fruits and vegetables can help:²

- ✓ Reduce the risk for a heart attack or stroke
- ✓ Lower the risk for type 2 diabetes
- ✓ Control blood pressure
- ✓ Improve bone health
- ✓ Lower cholesterol
- ✓ Protect vision
- ✓ Increase energy
- ✓ Prevent certain types of cancer
- ✓ Improve bowel health
- ✓ Control hunger and aid in weight management
- ✓ Support healthy skin and hair
- ✓ Prevent age-related memory loss

Check out the list of healthiest plant-based foods <http://tinyurl.com/nzcmcw>

A recent study looked at data on eating habits and heart disease. It showed that people who ate a lot of leafy greens were 16 percent less likely to have a heart attack or stroke than those who ate very few if any of them.³ Eating more leafy greens could save lives. About 610,000 people a year die of heart disease in the United States.⁴



Please pass the leafy greens

Adults should eat 2-3 cups of vegetables a day. About 10-15 percent of of them should be leafy greens.⁶ That's only ½ cup of leafy greens a day!

Line Up for These Top 10 Leafy Greens

It's been almost a century since Popeye first appeared in a comic strip touting the health benefits of spinach. But spinach isn't the only leafy green that's good for you. Not long ago, researchers wanted to find out what plant-based foods were packed with the most vitamins and nutrients.⁵ They studied the nutritional profile of 41 fruits and vegetables. And it turns out that the top 10 powerhouse plant-based foods are all leafy greens:

- ① Watercress
- ② Chinese cabbage
- ③ Swiss chard
- ④ Beet greens
- ⑤ Spinach
- ⑥ Chicory
- ⑦ Leaf lettuce
- ⑧ Parsley
- ⑨ Romaine lettuce
- ⑩ Collard greens



But these aren't the only leafy greens that are good for you. Kale, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, and turnip greens are all good for your health.

Try these leafy-green recipes tinyurl.com/ogzhn2m

How to Munch More Leafy Greens

If you don't eat leafy greens often, you may think that adding more to your diet means you'll need to eat mountains of salad. Eating more salad is a good way to eat more leafy greens, but it's not the only way. Take a look at these ways to add more leafy greens to your diet:

- Make a salad:** Make your own salad or order one from the menu. Start with romaine lettuce, spinach, and arugula. Add tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, nuts and seeds, or tofu and turn your salad into a meal.
- Wrap it up:** Make a wrap with sautéed vegetables, brown rice, and black beans. Add some leafy greens, and wrap it up in a whole-grain tortilla.
- Soup's on:** Add greens with larger, tougher leaves such as collard greens, kale, or mustard greens to your favorite soup.
- Try stir-fry:** Stir-fry chopped spinach, bok choy, or broccoli with chicken or tofu. Add peas, carrots, and other vegetables. Cook with olive or canola oil and flavor with garlic, onion, or ginger.

Make your own green smoothie <http://tinyurl.com/pz2c64n>

- Go green:** Make a green smoothie in a blender with frozen fruit, water or soymilk, and leafy greens. Popular greens for smoothies are spinach, kale, romaine lettuce, bok choy, Swiss chard, or collard greens.
- Steam it:** Try steaming collard greens, mustard greens, kale, or spinach. It only takes a few minutes to make these leafy greens tender and soft. Serve with a sprinkle of lemon juice for added flavor.
- Bake kale:** Lay some kale leaves on a cookie sheet. Lightly spray them with olive oil and bake in the oven to make your own kale chips.
- Opt for an omelet:** Add steamed broccoli and/or spinach to an egg-white or egg-substitute omelet.
- Make a sandwich:** Make a sandwich with whole-grain bread and your favorite fillings. Add leafy greens like spinach or romaine lettuce.
- Snack attack:** When you get the craving for a snack, munch on broccoli and spinach dip.

Make the effort to eat more leafy-green vegetables. You'll improve your health, feel better, and live longer.



Read “How to Prep Collard Green Leaves for Low-Carb Wraps” at Kitchenista Diaries: <https://tinyurl.com/hz98gmt>

RECIPE

Make Your Own Collard Green Wraps

Collard greens are the perfect size to replace tortillas as a sandwich wrap, however the leaves can be tough. A few seconds in boiling water will soften them. Then the leaves can be stored in your fridge for up to a week as a healthy, low-calorie alternative to tortillas. Here's how:

Ingredients:

1 bunch collard greens
Kosher salt, as needed
Apple cider vinegar, as needed
Large pot, large bowl of ice water, & a paring knife

Directions:

1. Wash the greens in a sink of cool water.
2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.
3. Meanwhile, prepare a large bowl of water, ice, a pinch of salt, and a splash of cider vinegar.
4. With a paring knife, carefully shave off the thick middle stem of the greens.
5. Drop the leaves into the boiling water uncovered for 30 seconds.
6. Transfer the leaves directly into the bowl of ice water. Let soak for 1 hour or more.
7. Pat the leaves dry on paper towels.
8. Stack the leaves on wax paper and place flat in a large plastic bag to store in the fridge up to a week.
9. Use the collard green wraps in place of tortillas to roll up guacamole and salsa, tuna or chicken salad, or brown rice and beans.

References

1. Adams, I. (2013). The health benefits of dark green leafy vegetables. University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service. Accessed on February 10, 2017 from <http://tinyurl.com/heq4do9>.
2. Slavin, J., Lloyd, B. (2012). Health benefits of fruits and vegetables. *Advances in Nutrition*, 3(4):506-516. doi: 10.3945/an.112.002154.
3. Polluck, R. (2016). The effect of green leafy and cruciferous vegetable intake on the incidence of cardiovascular disease: A meta-analysis. *JRSM Cardiovascular Disease*. doi: 10.1177/2048004016661435.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Heart disease facts. Accessed on February 10, 2017, from <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>.
5. Noia, J. (2014). Defining powerhouse fruits and vegetables: A nutrient density approach. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 11:130390. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd11.130390>.
6. Yan, L. (2016). Dark green leafy vegetables. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Accessed on February 10, 2017 from <http://tinyurl.com/hdua6pz>.





Munch More Leafy Greens

CHALLENGE

Add more leafy-green vegetables to your diet

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you munch more leafy-green vegetables.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you make to help you form a habit of eating more leafy-green vegetables.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you ate leafy-green vegetables. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

| MONTH: _____ | | | | | | | HC = Health Challenge™ | ex. min. = exercise minutes |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | Weight & weekly summary | |
| HC [] ex. min. _____ | | |
| HC [] ex. min. _____ | | |
| HC [] ex. min. _____ | | |
| HC [] ex. min. _____ | | |
| HC [] ex. min. _____ | | |

_____ Number of days this month I ate leafy-green vegetables

_____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____