

Warm Yourself Up with a Bowl of Soup

From a cook's point of view, there are many reasons for making soup. First and foremost, it's easy to make. Chocked full of such ingredients as vegetables, lentils, beans, and perhaps meat, soup can make a hearty entrée, especially if bolstered with a salad and bread, preferably whole-grain. With a little advance planning, soup can also last through several meals.

From the diner's perspective, homemade soup has more flavor and nutrients than any soup in a can. Homemade soup is also a good way to control weight, especially since you can control the fat, sodium, and calorie content. Soup can create a full feeling with a minimum of calories. It can keep you feeling full longer than starchy, higher-calorie foods like potatoes and refined breads, especially if made with hearty ingredients like lentils, beans, and whole-grain rice or pasta.

A vegetable soup can make a particularly satisfying dinner. For a purely vegetarian dish, use a vegetable broth; otherwise, a low-sodium, low-fat chicken broth will provide more body. Spinach and other greens add color, crunch and nutrients. Add some leftover meat or tofu for a protein-enriched soup. Hot pepper flakes, a few drops of hot sauce, or some chopped chilies can be added for those who like their soup a little spicy.

Using a wide variety of vegetables, herbs, and spices loads a soup with nutrients. It will also help you reach the goal of nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

Pamela Smith is a Registered Dietitian and nationally known radio and TV host. For more information, call 1-800-896-4010 or visit her website at www.pamsmith.com. Her new book, *When Your Hormones Go Haywire*, provides natural solutions for women over 40.



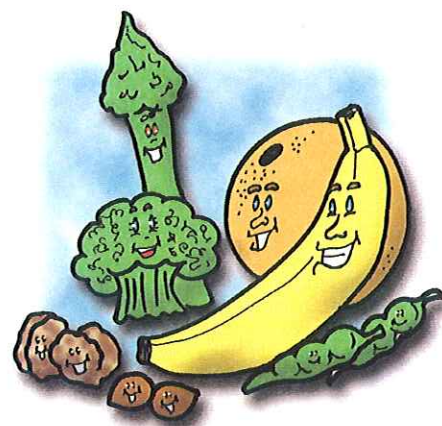
Focus on the Benefits of Folic Acid

Do you regularly eat foods rich in folic acid like oranges, dark green leafy vegetables, or fortified bread? Or do you take a multivitamin with folic acid every day?

Folic acid is a B vitamin that helps the body to make healthy new cells. Women who boost their folic acid intake before and during pregnancy can help prevent major birth defects. In addition to the benefits to women of childbearing age, folic acid is also an important part of a heart healthy diet. It helps lower homocysteine levels in the blood. Having high homocysteine impairs blood vessels, which makes arteries more vulnerable to plaque buildup. Some researchers also believe folic acid can help people with depression and Alzheimer's disease. Folic acid may also decrease the risk for certain cancers.

Most people should be able to get the amount of folic acid they need by eating a varied and balanced diet. Adults need 200 micrograms (.2 mg) a day. However, if you're pregnant or thinking of having a baby you should take a daily 400 micrograms (.4 mg) folic acid supplement. (Note: It's best to talk with your doctor to determine the best level of folic acid supplement you should take.)

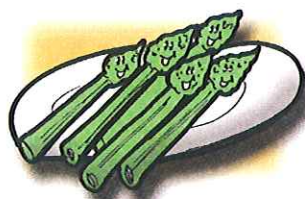
Here are several tips on how to get more folic acid in your diet:



- Eat a variety of foods that contain folic acid. Good sources include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, peas, brown rice, oranges, bananas, fortified breakfast cereals, and enriched breads.
- Remember that folate levels can diminish during preparation, cooking, or storage. To retain folate:
 - serve fruits and vegetables raw whenever possible
 - steam, boil, or simmer vegetables in a minimal amount of water
 - store vegetables in the refrigerator.
- Take a daily vitamin that has folic acid in it. Most multivitamins have enough but make sure the label says 100 percent next to folic acid. Some labels might use the word "folate." Talk to your doctor about the best vitamin regimen for you.

FRESH ASPARAGUS

Makes 4 servings



To trim asparagus before cooking or eating, hold a spear in both hands. Bend the stalk until it snaps. It breaks at the spot where it naturally thickens.

1 lb. fresh asparagus, trimmed
 1/4 cup chicken stock (fat-free/
 low-salt)
 1 tsp. Mrs. Dash seasoning
 1/2 tsp. Creole seasoning

Microwave asparagus in chicken stock and seasonings for about seven to eight minutes or until crisp tender.

From Pamela Smith's *Eat Well, Live Well*. Visit www.pamsmith.com for more information.

Each serving contains: 48 calories, 4 g. protein, 0 g. fat, 0 mg. cholesterol, 8 g. carbohydrates, 140 mg. sodium. Calories from fat 0 percent

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