

# Health Notes

## Be Your Own Nutrition Expert

by Dr. Mark Craft,  
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Today, everyone is a nutritional expert. In health food stores, grocery stores, drug stores, and doctors' offices, nutritional advice is given. Nutrition should be an important part of one's health-maintenance program. People are realizing this, and so is the business world. Chainstore vitamin shops in the mall, infomercials hawking their products like a snake-oil salesman, and "how-to-clone a million dollar nutrition practice" seminars for doctors is evidence that nutrition has become big business.

What all these experts should agree on is that vitamins and nutritional supplements are not a replacement for fresh fruits and vegetables. Fresh produce contains enzymes, which act as catalysts, allowing the body to easily process the nutrients contained in the food. Fruits and vegetables contain a high concentration of fiber, anti-oxidants, and water while being low in fat, calories, and salt. Fruits can also satisfy cravings for sweets, a healthy and sensible alternative to the afternoon Snickers bar. Fiber and anti-oxidants are important in our diet to eliminate carcinogens and other toxins. Vitamins such as C, the B's, beta-carotenes, and also minerals are packed into fresh produce.

If you are concerned with sugar intake be aware that fruits vary in their sugar content. Sugars contained in fresh produce are in a natural form, which converts to blood sugar slower than processed sugar. Glycemic index charts which measure the sugar content of foods is readily available in many nutrition books. For example, the glycemic index will show you that a pear has much less sugar than a pineapple.

Locally-grown produce provides more flavor, higher water and nutrient content than transported fruits and vegetables. Freezing fruits and vegetables protects much of the nutrient content. Dried fruit has a higher sugar content than fresh and, because it's dehydrated, has no water. Usually, canned fruits and vegetables have more sugar, less nutrients, and less flavor than fresh. Juices lack the fiber and have less nutrients than whole fruits and vegetables.

Our local farms and orchards are beginning to harvest their produce. There is nothing better to eat than a freshly picked blueberry, peach, or tomato on a warm August day. Take advantage of the local produce available at our farm stands and small markets. By enjoying these great foods at the best time of the year you will also support local business and fellow *Chamber* members. 

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