

## How Much is Too Much?

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### Part One: Vegetables (using them in smoothies)

We want to make sure that the first meal of the day is healthy and balanced. Think about it; most likely it's the longest period the body goes without an input of food. So it is important not to overload or underestimate what our breakfast should look like. Many of us are rushing and busy in the mornings, with little time (or motivation) to whip up bacon and eggs with a fruit cocktail on the side (although if you do have the time hats off to ya!). Breakfast smoothies are a great way to pack in a nutrient-dense meal that is quick and most of all portable.

Now the word out there is that the greener and more packed the smoothie, the better it is for you. Don't get me wrong, adding vegetables to your smoothies is a wonderful idea and a good way to get in some servings of vegetables that we need to keep ourselves healthy. But there does exist too much of a good thing.

Back to the basics, we now use MyPlate food model to determine how many servings of a certain food that we should eat per day and even per week for some things. This servings of a certain food group are dependent more on what type of nutrient you are eating, and what else you are pairing with it. So back to our smoothie example; if you are trying to fit the ol' 5-7 servings of veggies based from the previously used food pyramid, you might end up spending the morning in the bathroom. This is because for any nutrient, not just vegetables, as USDA research advances, we have learned that a VARIED diet is much more beneficial than reaching those hard-set numbers.

So if you, like many others have tried to fit all of your serving of vegetables in one smoothie, you may be delivering too much to the body at once. Vegetables are very high in fiber, which we do need, but everything is better in moderation. Different vegetables have different amounts of fiber and roughage that is beneficial to the intestines and are packed with vitamins and minerals. When comparing two vegetables commonly used in smoothies; spinach and kale, there are some big differences.

Kale (raw) while wonderful for its fibrous leave and antioxidant qualities one cup has about 2.5g of fiber. (Note: remove the kale leaves from the stems if using kale in your smoothie)

Spinach (raw) on the other hand is softer and less tough and fibrous, breaking down with less effort in the intestines; one lightly packed cup has about 0.7g of fiber.

Based on the MyPlate model, for the average adult women between 19-50 years of age, 2½ cups of vegetables are required per day. For the average adult male between 19-50 years of age, 3 cups of vegetables are recommended. Once we hit our older golden years, the body does not digest nutrients as easily, so overloading with fruits and vegetables can in this case be harmful due to undue stress on the intestines to digest more food than we need. For women 51+ years in age, we need only 2 cups of veggies per day, and for 51+ year old men 2½ cups are needed. This may seem like a trivial difference, but think about this, if we are digesting things more slowly, any extra nutrients added in on top only puts more stress on the gut, which can snowball into different forms of intestinal distress such as constipation or diarrhea, or cramping.

So before you load your smoothie up with a days-worth of vegetables, or all the possible greens under the sun, stop and think about what's best for the body. A varied and balanced breakfast smoothie can give you a great start to the day, with a serving of vegetables if you choose. Another thing to note is that some smoothie recipes are designed to make more than one serving, so keep in mind that you don't need to drink down that whole blender of smoothie. And don't fret about not getting all your veggies in. The rest of those servings can come with your other meals throughout the rest of your day. Happy blending.