The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day for adults. There are many ways to add these food groups to your diet, as they are available fresh, frozen, canned, dried and as juice. Fruits and vegetables may protect you from heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer by giving you many of the nutrients you need every day. The various colors provide myriad nutritional benefits. Listed below are some of the many nutrients available in fruits and vegetables.

**Green:** Vitamins C, K, A and folate, lutein, calcium, magnesium. Examples: spinach, romaine lettuce, Swiss chard, peppers, asparagus, broccoli, limes, kiwi, cabbage and peas.

**Red:** Lycopene, vitamins C and A. Examples: peppers, apples, tomatoes, strawberries, raspberries, watermelon, cherries, cranberries and beets.

**Orange:** Beta-carotene, potassium, vitamin C. Examples: carrots, sweet potatoes, peaches, oranges, cantaloupe, peppers, apricots, pumpkin.

**Yellow:** Beta-carotene, potassium, vitamins B and C. Examples: grapefruit, squash, bananas, corn, pineapples, yellow tomatoes and peppers.

**Blue and purple:** Resveratrol, lutein, vitamin C. Examples: blueberries, grapes, plums, blackberries and purple cabbage.

**White:** potassium, vitamin C, quercetin. Examples: onions, mushrooms, garlic, white corn, cauliflower and pears.

**Antioxidants: The hidden benefit of herbs and spices**
Antioxidants help improve overall health and well-being by neutralizing free radicals, which damage cells. Antioxidants have been found in a variety of herbs and spices, including cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, rosemary, garlic, sage, thyme, oregano, cumin, tumeric, tarragon and basil.

**Don’t forget omega-3 fatty acids**
Fatty fish contain a type of fat called omega-3 fatty acids. Research suggests that eating omega-3s lowers your chance of developing heart disease. Fish that naturally contain more oil (such as salmon, tuna, trout, herring, mackerel, anchovies and sardines) have more omega-3s than lean fish (such as cod, haddock and catfish). Other choices for omega-3s include canola, olive and flaxseed oil; avocados; dark green leafy vegetables; nuts, especially walnuts and almonds; nut butters, including peanut butter; and ground flaxseed.

(Continued on back)
**Be cautious about convenience foods**

Convenience, or processed, foods are those that have been altered from their natural state to make them stay fresh longer, for safety reasons or for convenience. They usually contain a lot of fats, including trans fats, and large amounts of salt and sugar. Convenience foods should be eaten sparingly or avoided. Common convenience/processed foods:

- Canned foods and frozen dinners, which may contain a lot of salt
- High-calorie snack foods, like chips and cheese snacks
- Packaged cookies, cakes, donuts and other sweets
- Sugary breakfast cereals
- Processed meats, like hotdogs, sausage, ham, bologna and many lunch meats

**Monitor your salt intake**

The American Heart Association has changed its guidelines for salt intake and recommends aiming to eat less than 1,500 mg/day. Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt.

**Recommended sugar intake**

The American Heart Association recommends that women should consume no more than 100 calories (6 teaspoons) of sugar a day, and men should consume no more than 150 calories (9 teaspoons) of sugar a day.

**Avoid all trans fats**

Consumption of trans fats adversely affects cholesterol levels. Read ingredient labels and avoid hydrogenated oils.

**Want to learn more?**

For healthy lifestyle tips, visit NortonHeartCare.com or call (502) 629-1234 to register for a free class or health screening.