

Living on WELL Street Blog: **“5-4-3-2-1-A-Day?”**

By Michael White, Worksite Wellness Technical Assistant, *We Choose Health*

**“The cucumber and the tomato are both fruit; the avocado is a nut. To assist with the dietary requirements of vegetarians, on the first Tuesday of the month a chicken is officially a vegetable.”**

– Jasper Fforde, British Novelist

The 5-A-Day For Better Health program is a national effort to raise fruit and vegetable consumption to between 5 and 9 servings a day. It claims that, since their program was started in 1991 by the National Cancer Institute and the National Institute of Health, fruit and vegetable consumption has increased from 3.0 servings per day to 4.4 servings a day. That is encouraging, but I know that is not the case for many of us. While I appreciate a “B.H.A.G.” (Big Hairy Audacious Goal), I find that satisfying smaller goals often leads to greater success. If fruits and vegetables are not a regular part of your diet, how about aiming for “4”, “3”, “2” or even “1” per day?

Personally, I have to make a conscious effort to succeed at eating “5” fruits and/or vegetables in any given day. On a good morning, I will make a fruit smoothie, add some kale, and satisfy 5 servings in one fell swoop. Lunch does not often contribute much to my fruit and vegetable intake, but a salad and fresh vegetables at dinner can propel me above the magic “5”. That describes a good day – one where the stars are perfectly aligned; I am not rushing out the door in the morning; food is readily available; and my favorite “chef” is thinking healthy!

Regardless of whether it’s fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or juiced fruits and vegetables, it all counts toward the number of daily servings. When all of these available forms are considered, along with the proper serving size, it becomes much easier to consume the desired number of servings each day. Providing fresh whole foods at cost can be a very effective way to encourage this at work. Services like The Fruit Guys will deliver quality produce to your workplace every week. National food retailers, and even some local supermarkets, will provide the same service.

Keeping track of your servings is made easier with some simple portion-size guidelines. Use WebMD’s serving size measures below to help you achieve your fruit and vegetable consumption goal.

#### **Fruits Serving Sizes**

- 1/2 banana
- 1 small apple, orange, or pear
- 1/2 cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit

#### **Vegetables Serving Sizes**

- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables
- 1/2 cup of other vegetables; cooked, raw (chopped), or canned
- 1/2 cup of vegetable juice

Survey your co-workers. Find out the average number of servings consumed and then challenge everyone, over a specified number of weeks, to replace unhealthy food with healthy “real” food. **EAT 5-A-DAY EVERY DAY** is a worksite health promotion activity that can help this effort. A complete description of the activity can be found on the We Choose Health 365 website at: <http://wechoosehealth365.com/asp/public/Page.aspx?pid=15548> .

Eat WELL!

Michael

*Michael White is a “culture of health curator”, and someone who seeks to live as happy and healthy as possible - for as long as possible! He loves to talk and write about these topics, and is happy to assist people and organizations in making it happen. Please contact him at: [michaelwhite@wellstreetpartners.com](mailto:michaelwhite@wellstreetpartners.com).*