

Good Health, Weight Loss, and Vegetables

By Jean Jeffers, Staff Writer

Over the course of 15 months or so, Chuck Bent lost 100 pounds. Equally impressive: he's kept the weight off since 2010.

How did he do it?

Chuck, a health and nutrition educator at Louisville's Milestone Wellness Center, says, "I lost the weight on a program featuring unlimited veggies and fruits, to help keep me full. I lost 80 pounds the first year, and I lost another 20 pounds in 13 weeks, later, by focusing on fruits and veggies."

Chuck adds: "Vegetables are important as part of a weight loss program. Veggies average only 5 to 20 calories per ounce, so anchoring 60-70 percent of your lunch or dinner plate with steamed vegetables or salad can really help to reduce the amount of higher calorie options, such as grains and meat which cover our plates today."

The typical American diet is virtually devoid of nutrients. The average American only consumes about 1.5 cups of vegetables per day, and that primarily consists of a serving of fries with lettuce and tomato from a deli sandwich. Nutritional experts advise us to eat much more:

"Consuming at least five cups of fresh vegetables and fruits in a rainbow of colors each day, can provide your body with a myriad of vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients that can help boost your immune system, strengthen your cardiovascular system, and promote eye and colon health."

In her book "Your Inner Skinny", Dr. Joy Bauer says, "What is important about eating vegetables is that they provide an array of nutrients, from B vitamins, folate, riboflavin, niacin to antioxidants such as vitamin C, E, beta-carotene, and other phytochemicals."

Bauer expounds on the benefits of various vegetables:

- B vitamins help keep hair strong and healthy. They also reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease and age-related memory loss. Folate is

involved in the production of serotonin, improving mood, and B6 aids in dopamine production. Mushrooms are high in B vitamins, riboflavin, and niacin. Artichoke hearts contain niacin.

- Vitamin E, in asparagus, works with vitamin C to keep skin healthy.

- Antioxidants like vitamin C, lutein, zeaxanthin, and anthocyanins may help reduce the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration. Vitamin C may also be useful in the prevention of bone loss and the reduction of chances of a fracture.

- Vitamin D, found in mushrooms, keeps bones strong and protects from diseases such as diabetes and cancer.

- Anthocyanins, in such veggies as rhubarb, and quercetin, found in celery, tomatoes, and horseradish root, are classified as anti-inflammatory. Research indicates that these two compounds may slow the rate of age related memory loss and protect against arthritis and other inflammatory conditions.

- Antioxidants such as glucosinolates, found in cruciferous vegetables and cauliflower, and nasunin, present in the purple skins of eggplant, are linked to guarding against cancer.

- Betacyanin, a powerful antioxidant found in beets, is known for its cancer-protective effects, as are flavonoids, found in Brussels sprouts.

- Beta carotene contributes to the growth and repair of body tissues. This antioxidant is found in pumpkin, winter squash, carrots, and sweet potatoes.

The best vegetables to speed up weight loss are green vegetables — kale, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, Swiss chard. These are excellent sources of vitamins A, C, and K which are often lacking in our diets.

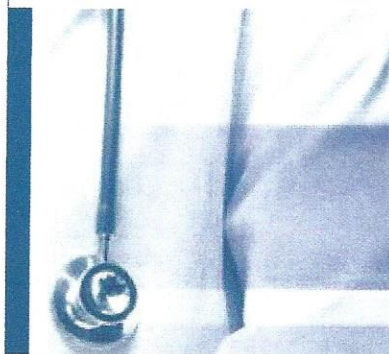
There is growing evidence to suggest that plant based foods help to control cravings and overeating. This goes a long way toward weight loss, so load up your plate today.

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Chuck Bent before/after: Bent lost 100 pounds on a program featuring unlimited fruits and vegetables.

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