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5 Side Effects of Not Eating Enough Veggies

March 15, 2017



If there is one food that people consistently admit not getting enough of, it's veggies. Even though people know they're good for them, they just can't seem to eat enough to meet the recommended daily intake (2 1/2 to 3 cups for adults). But in addition to missing out on health-promoting benefits, not eating enough vegetables means you may be at risk of experiencing some negative effects as well. Here are five common signs you may not be consuming enough veggies.

1. You feel tired.

If your diet is lacking veggies, you miss out on critical anti-inflammatory nutrients that help your body fight off damage and disease caused by stress or environmental factors, such as exposure to household chemicals or pollution. Without the health-promoting nutrients found in veggies, you're asking your body to protect you without giving it the weapons to fight. This ultimately makes you weaker, exhausts your system and leaves you worn out.

In addition, if you're like most Americans, you're likely dehydrated, which contributes to lethargy because all processes in the body rely on water. Without enough water, your body can't function efficiently and you'll likely feel exhausted.

Try this: [Crunchy Zesty Cucumber & Cantaloupe Salad](#)

Fill your plate with veggies, which are typically 87 to 92% water and you'll hydrate with water-rich, nutrient-boosting foods that keep you feeling full of energy, and crowd out the heavier water-lacking foods that take hours to digest.

Try this: [Savory Green Beans](#)



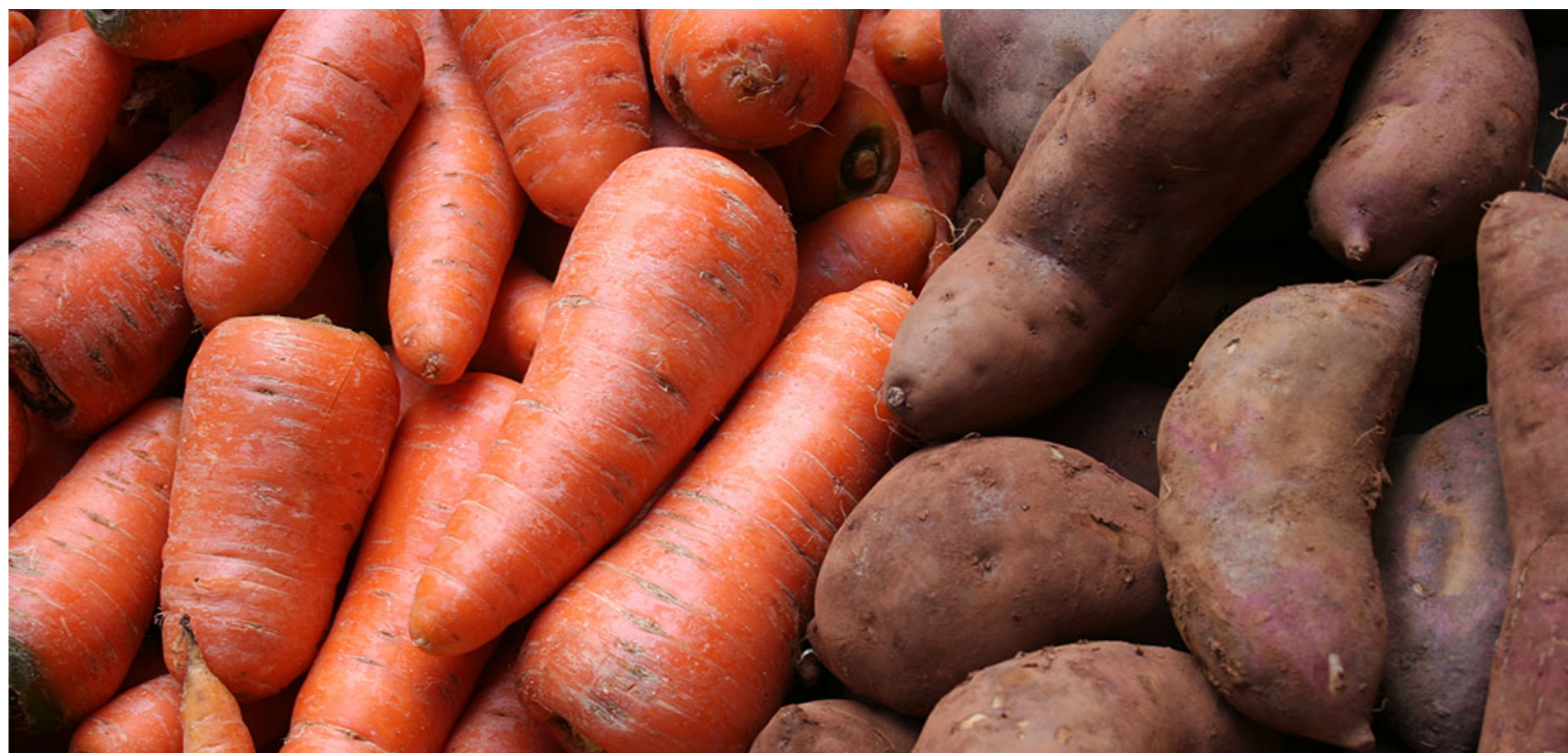
2. Your skin looks lackluster and dull.

Veggies are packed with water, so they plump up cells and fill the spaces between them, helping to smooth out fine lines and wrinkles. The majority of the population is chronically mildly dehydrated, which, combined with not getting enough water-rich veggies, makes skin look withered and older.

Vegetables contain specific nutrients that make your skin vibrant, including:

Beta-carotene: Lacking a healthy hue and glow? Beta-carotene acts like a natural sunblock and protects skin from sun damage, so be sure to eat plenty of carrots, spinach, sweet potatoes, butternut squash and other orange- and green-colored produce.

Try these: [Sweet Potato Nachos](#), [Spicy Carrot Fries](#), [Mini Vegan Carrot Cakes](#)



Antioxidants: Antioxidants protect the skin against pollution and other environmental toxins, stress and the sun as they mop up free radicals that damage skin cells and lead to premature aging. Most veggies contain healthy amounts of antioxidants.

Try this: [Fresh Tomato Salsa](#)



Omega-3s: Omega-3s contain powerful anti-inflammatory compounds that give skin a smoother appearance and tame skin irritations. They also help to moisturize the skin, so load up on cabbage, which is a great source of omega-3s.

Try this: [Easy Crunchy Braised Cabbage](#)



Water and potassium: Water and potassium, which are abundant in most veggies, help keep skin hydrated and restore fluid balance so skin doesn't look wrinkled and withered.

Enjoy these: [Creamy Cauliflower Mash](#) and [Easy Peasy Brussels Sprouts](#)



3. You'll lower your chances for optimal exercise performance and instead experience less-effective exercise recovery.

While exercise is important to build strength, stamina, maintain a healthy weight and for overall health, the demand on the body creates free radicals that damage the cells and muscles. Packed with phytonutrients and antioxidants, veggies help to fight damage caused by exercise by neutralizing free radicals so the body can heal. Here are some good choices:

Watercress: One study showed that male athletes given a small bag (about 3 ounces) of watercress before short intense bursts of exercise on a treadmill had less DNA damage. Eat this peppery flavored veggie on a sandwich, in a salad, or on a pizza.

Beets and Beet Juice: Beets are rich in nitrates, which help blood vessels dilate, increasing blood flow to muscles during exercise and decreasing the amount of oxygen muscles need. Beets may help your muscles to work more efficiently and move faster. Nitrate levels benefit from a loading phase, so drink about 6-8 ounces of beet juice for a few days in a row or before a competition.

Also, try this: [Beet and Apple Salad](#)



Tomatoes: Research has shown that athletes that drank tomato juice before and after exercise recovered faster than those who carb-loaded after each workout. Tomatoes are packed with antioxidants and lycopene that hasten recovery by protecting your body against free radical damage and inflammation.

To make a tomato smoothie, blend one-half cup of ice, 1 cup of grape tomatoes, $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup frozen strawberries, 6 ounces of nonfat strawberry yogurt and 3 medium-size basil leaves.

Also, try these: [Tomato, Cucumber, Avocado and Chickpea Salad](#) and [Egg Salad Tomato Poppers](#)



4. You're constipated.

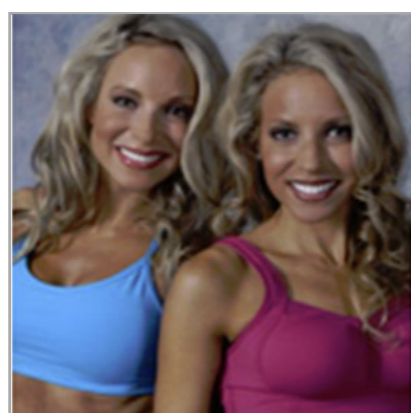
While eating white rice, cheese, red meat and a high-fat diet, as well as not drinking enough fluids or exercising may contribute to constipation, it would likely not be an issue if you ate your veggies. Veggies contain the fiber and the water that your body needs to move the waste through and out of your body. Most women fall short of their fiber needs, consuming only about 15 of their required 25 grams a day; most men only get about half of their 38 required grams a day. Increase your veggie intake and constipation will likely be a problem of the past. If you're a female, aim to consume at least 2-1/2 cups or more of raw or cooked vegetables; if you're a male aim for 3 cups or more daily.

5. You're at an increased risk for heart disease.

Heart disease is the number-one killer in the U.S., and if you don't get enough veggies, you're putting yourself at risk. That's because vegetables fight against heart disease by lowering cholesterol and blood pressure and by decreasing inflammation in the arteries. Plus, when you eat more veggies, you'll consume less of the foods that clog the arteries and contribute to heart disease. This includes fatty red meats, cookies and cakes, butter and hydrogenated oils.

Veggies contain these heart-helpers:

- Potassium, which counteracts sodium, keeps the heart vessels more pliable and reduces blood pressure.
- Fiber, which lowers cholesterol.
- Phytonutrients, which fight against inflammation, act as antioxidants and repair cells.
- B vitamins, which help to lower homocysteine, an amino acid in the blood that may promote fatty deposits in blood cells.



THE NUTRITION TWINS

Contributor

Tammy Lakatos Shames and Elysse ("Lyssie") Lakatos, The Nutrition Twins®, share a passion to teach people how to eat healthfully and exercise so they'll have energy to live happy lives. The twins have been featured as nutrition experts on Good Morning America, Discovery Health, Fox News, NBC, Bravo, CBS, The Learning Channel, FitTV, Oxygen Network, and Fox & Friends. They co-wrote *The Nutrition Twins Veggie Cure: Expert Advice and Tantalizing Recipes for Health, Energy and Beauty*, *The Secret to Skinny: How Salt Makes You Fat* and *the 4-Week Plan to Drop A Size & Get Healthier with Simple Low Sodium Swaps*. The twins are both ACE Certified Personal Trainers, and members of the American Dietetic Association and several Dietetic Practice Groups.

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