

Aging Healthfully Newsletter

Illinois Department on Aging



Every year, the first full week in August is National Farmers' Market Week!

This year it is Sunday, August 4th through Saturday, August 10th!

Benefits of Eating Farmers' Market Produce:

- You can't beat the taste of locally grown food - the crops are picked at their peak of ripeness and are in season, which means they taste the very best!
- Local crops mean closer to home and quicker to reach your dinner table than food coming from farther away, which means this food is as real and as fresh as it gets.
- Choosing locally grown food from Farmers Markets helps support local families & helps build the community in which you live.
- You can be sure that local foods are safe - farmers take great pride and responsibility in their crops and care about their community and their consumers.
- Locally grown food helps our environment, our ecosystem, and our wildlife.
- By supporting local foods now, you are also investing in the future of farms in your community as well as your community's food security.

Did you know the Older Americans Act of 1965 ...

"...encourages the use of locally grown foods in meal programs..." and recommends *"...potential partnerships and contracts with local producers and providers of locally grown foods (Section 339 (2)(L))."*

What is the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program & Who Can Participate?

- A program that provides fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs from farmers' markets to seniors at nutritional risk
- Expands awareness and use of farmers' markets
- Eligible seniors must be 60 years or older and have a household income of not more than 185% of the Federal poverty income guidelines

In Season Farmers' Market Produce from August – October



Beets:

- ✓ Are available year-round, but are best from **June through December**.
- ✓ Beets with the greens still attached should be a bright color and fresh looking.
- ✓ Beets without their greens attached should be heavy & firm (not wrinkled or sprouting).
- ✓ Baby (bunched) beets are more tender than regular beets and require less time to cook.
- ✓ They can be stored in a plastic bag in the fridge for about 1 week.

Eggplant:

- ✓ Eggplant is available year-round, but peak months are from **August through September**.
- ✓ Look for firm, heavy eggplants with a smooth skin – avoid those with soft spots or browning.
- ✓ The skin is edible on young eggplants, but can be very bitter on older/larger eggplants and should be peeled.
- ✓ Store eggplants in a cool, dry place and use within 1-2 days of purchasing or you can wrap them in plastic wrap and store in the fridge for up to 4 days.

Melons:

- ✓ Many varieties are available all year long – See months listed below for peak ripeness.
- ✓ Watermelon (May through **August**); Cantaloupe (June through **August**); Honeydew (**June through October**).
- ✓ Choose melons that are heavier than the others, free of bruises, have a nice aroma, and if a stem is still present it should not look shriveled.
- ✓ Store unripe melons at room temperature and ripe melons in the fridge.

Peaches:

- ✓ Peaches are at their peak ripeness from **June until the end of September**.
- ✓ Peaches should be slightly soft when ripe with velvety skins. Avoid peaches that are greenish or hard as they will likely not ripen.
- ✓ Ripe peaches should be eaten as soon as possible, but they can also be stored for 3-4 days at room temperature or in the fridge.
- ✓ Rinse peaches well before eating – You can eat the skins if you want, but the pit needs to be removed. Slice the peach in halve & twist to separate and remove the pit.

Radishes:

- ✓ Available year-round, but their peak months are in the Spring and **Fall**
- ✓ Look for firm, compact radishes. If leaves are still attached, they should be fresh looking and a bright green color.
- ✓ Wash and trim radishes just before using – you can also soak them in cool water to increase their crispness.
- ✓ To store radishes, discard the leaves and place the radish roots in a plastic bag in the fridge for up to 1 week

(Note: this is not a complete list)



August is Cataract Awareness Month

Eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables every day (for seniors this is a minimum of 4-5 cups per day) is one of the best ways to protect your eyesight!

What counts as a 1/2 cup equivalent of fruits?

- A medium apple, banana, orange, or pear
- ½ cup chopped, frozen, cooked, or canned (drained) fruit
- ½ cup 100% fruit juice
- ¼ cup dried fruit



Note: fresh, frozen, or canned fruit will preferably be packed in 100% juice or water, without sugar or light syrup.

According the World Health Organization (WHO), we are living longer than we have ever lived before. The average life expectancy in the U.S. is continuing to rise. It is estimated that by year 2050, 17% of the world's population will be 65 years or older – currently 9% of the world's population is seniors in this age range.

Living a longer life is great news, but it also means living with more chronic diseases and health conditions that are associated with aging.

One of the most common doctor-diagnosed health problems for people 65 years and older is eye conditions.

Diseases of the Eye Associated with Aging:

- Vision impairments are almost 3 times more likely for those aged 65 and older.
- **Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)** is one of the leading causes of vision loss associated with aging.
- **Cataracts** – by age 80 more than half of Americans either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery.
- **Glaucoma** – people over the age of 60, African Americans (40 years or older), and those with a family history of glaucoma are at a higher risk.

There is good news in *sight* – Lifestyle factors such as...

- Quitting smoking
- Participating in regular exercise (30 minutes at least 5 days a week, with your doctor's permission)
- Consuming a diet rich in fruits and vegetables (think dark leafy greens and bright orange colored produce)

Can modify or reduce your risk for many of these age-related eye diseases!

Fruits & Vegetables Rich in Carotenoids Protect Eye Health

If a healthy adult is following the 2015 to 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, they should get approximately 6 milligrams per day of lutein. This amount is associated with reduced risk for age-related eye disease, but more is always better!

Lutein is a type of carotenoid (antioxidant) that can absorb harmful blue light, which is damaging to the eye. Both lutein and zeaxanthin are found in high amounts in the retina.

Lutein-rich foods:

- Brussels sprouts
- Lettuces – romaine, arugula, green leaf, kale
- Broccoli
- Spinach



Zeaxanthin-rich foods:

- Spinach
- Kale (1 cup of cooked kale contains 6mg lutein and zeaxanthin)
- Corn
- Nectarines
- Tangerines

Attachments:

- Farmers Markets by County
- Roadside Stands by County
- What's in Season
- FMNP Brochure - DHS Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Brochure
- Fruit or Vegetable Tasting Activity
- Test Your Nutrition Knowledge (Activity)
- August Recipes: Ginger Peach Salsa; Peach Pie Oatmeal

References:

- <https://www.ams.usda.gov/publications/NFMW>
- <https://cuesa.org/learn/10-reasons-support-farmers-markets>
- <https://foodandnutrition.org/from-the-magazine/eating-for-eye-health/>
- https://nei.nih.gov/health/cataract/cataract_facts
- https://nei.nih.gov/health/glaucoma/glaucoma_facts

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<https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/CommunityServices/nutrition/Pages/nutrition.aspx>