



Broccoli



Fun Facts: Broccoli is the eighth most frequently eaten vegetable in the U.S. and is the most popular of the cabbage, or cruciferous, family of vegetables. The part we eat is the unopened flower buds, along with the top portion of the stem. Eating broccoli helps protect health against heart disease and cancer. Sulfur contributes to broccoli's flavor.

Selecting Fresh Broccoli: Look for broccoli with tender stems and heads that are firm, tight and dark green or purplish-green. Avoid broccoli with wilted, soft, slippery, tough, thick or dry stems. Avoid broccoli with heads that have enlarged buds or yellow areas—those are broccoli flowers and are signs that the head is too old for best flavor.

Measuring Fresh Broccoli:

1 pound raw = about 13 ounces ready to eat = about 4 cups raw = about 2 cups cooked
1/2 cup cooked = about 1 1/2 ounces by weight = about 40 grams

Handling and Preserving: Refrigerate unwashed, dry broccoli in a perforated plastic bag in the vegetable drawer. It will stay fresh for 3 to 14 days, but for the best nutrition and taste, use during the first few days. Unrefrigerated, it quickly becomes fibrous and woody, and wet broccoli becomes limp and moldy. **To freeze,** select tender broccoli. Wash, cut off ends, and peel stalks if tough. If the head has insects, soak it in 4 cups cold water with 1 teaspoon salt for 30 minutes. Place 1-inch pieces in boiling water for 3 minutes. Drain immediately and place in ice water for 3 minutes. Drain again. Pack into freezer bags, leaving 3 inches of air space. Squeeze out the air, seal, date and freeze.

Preparation and Serving: Wash fresh broccoli under cool running water and cut off the bottom end of each stalk. If the head has insects, soak it in 4 cups cold water with 1 teaspoon salt for 30 minutes. To maintain its nutrients, do not soak longer. If the stem is tough, peel the outer stalk. If the stem is very large, split it or cut it into strips or rounds. Serve raw or cooked broccoli plain or with dips, sauces, pasta or in casseroles. To cook broccoli: steam, microwave, boil or stir-fry the stems for 1-2 minutes, then add the florets which have been cut into same-sized pieces and cook until fork-tender. For the best taste, color, texture and nutrition, and to avoid a strong odor, do not overcook.

Nutrition Facts 1 serving = 1/2 cup cooked or raw broccoli. Each 1/2 cup cooked chopped broccoli has: Calories 11; Protein 1 gram; Carbohydrates 2 grams; Fat 0 grams. Broccoli contributes fiber, carotenoids (which the body converts to vitamin A), vitamins C and K, and many other nutrients, antioxidants and healthful phytochemicals to the diet.

References: www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/veggies; ESHA Food Processor; www.fda.gov/fdac/special/foodlabel/raw.html; Food for Fifty, 11th edition, 2001, by M. Molt, Prentice Hall; www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/fntr2/MF1181.pdf

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