



Tips for Eating More Fruits and Vegetables PEAS

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The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*¹ recommend that adults eat 1 ½ – 2 ½ cups of fruits and 2 – 4 cups of vegetables a day to reduce the risk for diet-related chronic diseases. However, only 1 in 10 Americans eat the recommended amounts of fruits or vegetables.² There are many different ways to add a variety of fruits and vegetables to your diet. This publication focuses on garden peas and provides tips on how select, store, prepare and preserve them.

Shopping Tips³

- Choose firm, deep green pea pods.
- Avoid wrinkled, soft, or brown pods.
- You can buy canned or frozen peas, which already have the pod or shell removed.



How To Clean and Store⁴

- To store fresh peas, put the peas in a plastic bag with holes and refrigerate for 3 to 5 days.
- Avoid washing peas until you are going to eat them. They will stay fresh longer this way.

How To Prepare

- Peas can be eaten cold or cooked.
- Sugar snap peas and snow peas are eaten with the pod. You do not need to remove the peas from the pod. Eat them raw with a dip such as hummus for a healthy snack. You can also stir fry them with meat, beans, other vegetables, and/or sauce.
- Fresh green peas or garden peas are removed from the pod before eating. To do this, separate the pod with your fingers and scoop out the peas from the inside.
- Fresh or frozen green or garden peas can be microwaved, boiled or steamed. You can even add them to soups and stews.

How To Preserve^{5,6,7,8,}

- When storing snap or snow peas, leave them in the pod. Wash and then cut them to your desired size. For English and garden peas, shell them before washing and make sure to drain them well.



Spread washed peas on a baking sheet to freeze. Once frozen, transfer to a plastic bag or glass container. Write the date on the container.

- **Freezing:** First wash and blanch the peas. To blanch, boil snap peas for 3 minutes and shelled peas for 1 ½ minutes. Cool them in ice water. Drain and spread them on a baking sheet to freeze. When they are fully frozen, move them to plastic bags. The sealed bags can be stored in the freezer for up to a year. Try adding the date on the bag to ensure use before the year mark.
- **Drying:** Dried peas are great added to soups or stews. Prepare them for drying by washing and then blanching them for about 4 minutes, as described above. Then follow a recipe to dry them using an oven or dehydrator. Always store dried foods inside sealed jars or bags in a cool, dry place. Dried foods will keep for 6 to 12 months.
- **Canning:** It is not recommended that you can snow peas, but you can preserve garden or English peas by canning. Wash the peas, but do not blanch. Use the pressure method for safety, as peas are low in acidity. Add a teaspoon of canning salt to each quart jar to improve flavor. Canned peas will stay good for up to a year.
- Ask your [local Cooperative Extension](https://nchfp.uga.edu/) office for more detailed information about safely preserving peas, or visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation at <https://nchfp.uga.edu/>

Why Peas Are Healthy^{9,10}

Peas contain many nutrients your body needs to be healthy:

- **Vitamin C:** Helps the body heal from bumps and bruises and fight infections.
- **Phosphorus:** Helps the body use energy and keeps bones and teeth strong.
- **Magnesium:** Helps the body use energy and tells muscles when to move.
- **Vitamin K:** Helps blood to clot and wounds to heal.

How They Are Grown¹¹

- Pea plants are grown from seed in early spring or late summer and are harvested in cool weather.
- Collect the peas from their vines when the seeds are still in the pod so that they can be eaten.
- Try to harvest in the early morning or the evening when humidity is low. This prevents the pea pods from breaking open.

Botanical Information¹¹

- Peas grow in pods on the pea plant, *Pisum sativum*, which is a bush that grows in early spring or late summer.
- Pea plants are grown as annuals, meaning they only live for one year.
- Genetic scientists say pea plants come from four major centers: Central Asia, Near East, Abyssinia (modern Ethiopia), and the Mediterranean.

Fun Facts¹¹

- Peas are considered one of the top four most important legume crops in the world, along with soybeans, peanuts, and beans.
- While peas are not the most popular fresh vegetable in the U.S., they are the most popular processed vegetable, as many people buy them frozen, canned, or dried.
- In Spain, people use peas as a beauty product! They make flour out of dried peas, create a paste with it, and spread it on their skin to improve softness.





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