

# Pick a **better snack**<sup>™</sup> – THE COLOR WAY

## LETTUCE

*Wash. Eat. How easy is that?*



Lettuce may be the most eaten vegetable because of its role in salads as well as sandwiches. It provides good amounts of vitamin C as well as folate. Compared with other 'greens,' lettuce offers minimal nutritional value with iceberg lettuce being at the bottom of the list. In general, the darker and deeper green the leaves, the higher the nutritional value. There are four basic types of lettuce available in markets today – butterhead, iceberg, loose leaf and romaine. In addition to buying individual head or bunches of lettuce, we also have a wide assortment of pre-washed, bagged lettuce to choose from.

Butterhead – This category includes Boston and Bibb lettuce. It has a soft, buttery texture and a mild flavor.

Iceberg – The texture is crisp and flavor is very mild. Although it's not a nutrition powerhouse, it does have some benefits. A 2 cup portion (2 vegetable servings) has more than 10 percent of the RDA for folate. When purchased as a bag salad, the added red cabbage and carrot contribute vital nutrients and allow the iceberg to contribute the mild crisp texture.

Looseleaf – This type of lettuce does not form a head. Instead, loose leaves are joined at a stem. Green and red tipped lettuce are popular. The leaves may be ruffled or smooth. The taste is mild and delicate.

Romaine – This has long, deep green leaves that are rounded on the end. You may think Caesar salad when you think of romaine. The leaves are crisp and the taste is stronger but not bitter.

If you don't plan to use lettuce right away, store unwashed in perforated plastic bags. If you brought it home in plastic bags, poke a few holes in the bag and keep it open to allow air to circulate. Avoid storing lettuce near apples because the ethylene gas given off by the apples will cause the lettuce to develop brown spots and decay. Wash all lettuce in cool water shortly before using. To speed mealtime preparation, wash and dry leaves (a salad spinner is ideal) then layer in clean paper towels in a plastic bag. Refrigerate until serving time – best if within several hours for optimal nutrient retention.

Include **GREEN** fruits and vegetables in your low-fat diet to maintain:

- Vision health
- Strong bones and teeth
- A lower risk of some cancers

Pick a **better snack**<sup>™</sup> was developed in partnership with the Iowa Nutrition Network, Iowa State University Extension, and the USDA's Food Stamp Program and Team Nutrition - equal opportunity providers and employers. For more information, visit the Iowa Department of Public Health web site

[www.idph.state.ia.us/pickabetersnack](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/pickabetersnack) or Iowa State University Extension web site

[www.extension.iastate.edu/food](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/food). For more information about 5 A Day the Color Way<sup>™</sup>, visit [www.5aday.com](http://www.5aday.com).