Why don't we eat enough fruits and vegetables? What is it about these colorful, earthy foods that give them such a bad wrap? We've been told for years by health professionals to get in our five-a-day, which is really five-to-nine-a-day now, but for some reason, that message isn't producing results.

Statistics show that over 90 percent of Americans consume fewer fruits and vegetables than the daily recommended amount, which can be anywhere from two to six and a half cups. And, according to the American Cancer Society, our consumption has remained at the same low levels for nearly two decades, even though research shows that diets high in these foods decrease the risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes and help with weight control.

So what's the deal? Some say fruits and veggies are too expensive or too hard to find, especially in rural areas. Other people don't like them, or don't know how to store them to keep them fresher longer. If any of these reasons hit home with you, there are some great resources out there that can help you out.

The Produce for Better Health Foundation, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have kicked off a new campaign to entice fruits and veggies back into our lives, called the Fruits and Veggies More Matters campaign. Their website, www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org, is full of great information, including a video center that plays short segments on how to select, store and prepare a variety of fruits and vegetables.

There is also information on how to shop for fruits and veggies, recipe ideas, tips for cooking on a budget, meals that take 30 minutes or less, and ideas for packing a healthy lunchbox. This is definitely a web site worth checking out.

One way to save costs on fruits and vegetables is to plant your own. Maybe it's the unexpected 70-degree weather in early March, but gardening sounds pretty appealing right about now. While there's still plenty of time to continue gazing outside at the dead stubble of weeds currently poking through last years' garden, it is a great time to get a jump on the growing season inside by planting your own seedlings.

If you've got some planting containers, soil and seeds, this could be a great project for the kids and your trip to the produce isle could become as close as your own backyard. A great place to get some growing tips would be your local extension office.

Including fruits and vegetables in your diet doesn't have to be hard; it just takes a little planning. But that planning pays off by providing antioxidants that protect your body's cells from damage, by keeping your immune system healthy and they may also reduce your risk for cancer and other diseases.