Choose from the Colors of the Rainbow

To feel and look your best, include the colors of the rainbow on your plate. We’re talking about fruits and vegetables - and their health benefits are indisputable. The list of health-promoting paybacks of eating fruits and vegetables are impressive, and they include:

- Lowers your risk of certain cancers
- Decreases your risk of heart disease
- Reduces your risk of stroke
- Reduces high blood pressure
- Helps you lose and manage your weight

As part of an active lifestyle, eating plenty of fruits and vegetables can also help improve your quality of life by giving you sustained energy to perform well and feel even better.

So, the next time you sit down to a meal, make your plate as colorful as you can. Choose foods from these color groups regularly.

**Green**
Leafy greens, green peppers, broccoli, green beans, peas, green apples, green grapes, kiwifruit, honeydew.

**Orange/yellow**
Carrots, sweet potatoes, butternut and winter squash, oranges, nectarines, peaches, cantaloupe, orange and yellow peppers.

**Red**
Tomatoes, marinara sauce, red peppers, apples, pink grapefruit, cherries, watermelon, raspberries, strawberries, kidney beans, red lentils.

**Blue/purple**
Eggplant, purple grapes, plums, raisins, blueberries, blackberries, black currants, purple figs.

**White**
Cauliflower, mushrooms, garlic, onions, shallots, turnips, bananas, parsnips.

Think you’ll get the same benefits from taking vitamins or other supplements? Think again. Fruits and vegetables deliver vitamins, minerals, fiber and disease-fighting phytochemicals that work as a team to give them their health-promoting properties. There’s really no replacement for old-fashioned fruits and vegetables. Aim for nine servings per day.
Did you know?

Blueberries have more antioxidants than most other fruits and vegetables, and contain over 40 compounds thought to have cancer-preventive properties.

Get the benefits of blueberries in the smoothie recipe below. Also, add blueberries to salads, cereals and yogurt.

“Top 20”

“Eating by color” is a good way to ensure you are getting plenty of health-promoting foods. Colorful foods are good sources of disease-fighting compounds known as antioxidants. It’s these antioxidants that give many foods their bright colors, and fight damage to cells caused by free radicals. Experts believe that free radicals are what may fuel many diseases like heart disease and cancer, and even aging.

To get your daily dose of disease-fighting antioxidants, choose from this list of “top 20” foods that fall highest on the list of the most antioxidant-rich foods, as ranked by nutrition scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

- Small red beans (dried)
- Red kidney beans
- Pinto beans
- Blueberries
- Cranberries
- Artichokes (cooked)
- Blackberries
- Prunes
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Red Delicious apples
- Granny Smith apples
- Pecans
- Sweet cherries
- Black plums
- Russet potatoes (cooked)
- Black beans (dried)
- Plums
- Gala apples


Whether a food is eaten fresh, frozen, processed or cooked can affect its antioxidant potency—for good or worse. While blueberries are best when eaten fresh rather than cooked, the antioxidant power of tomatoes is actually raised by gentle cooking. That being said, don’t get hung up on the details. Instead, focus on eating generous daily servings of a variety of fruits, vegetables and other wholesome foods. And...choose from the colors of the rainbow.

For an antioxidant “Power Salad,” toss together some dark leafy greens, dried cranberries or blueberries, red beans and chopped pecans. Toss with olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

Blueberry Banana Shake

2 cups low-fat vanilla yogurt
(regular yogurt or frozen yogurt)
1 cup vanilla soymilk
1 cup blueberries
1 banana

Place all ingredients in a blender, and blend at high speed until smooth. Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 168 calories, 0 gm fat, 33 gm carbs, 6 gm protein

Source: The Cooking Cardiologist; Dr. Richard Collins.