

BOOSTING HEALTH BY 'EATING A RAINBOW'

Posted on April 24, 2019



The colours of springtime

Spring is a great time of year to reflect on the food we prepare for ourselves and those we care for. So much is beginning to grow, and the coming months will provide us with an abundance of variety in fruits and vegetables.

I invite you to take a moment to think about your daily choices of fruits and veg. Now take a moment to consider how many **colours** you might eat over a week? Can you see less than 5 or more than 10? The more colours of the rainbow we eat over a week the more confident we can feel that we are consuming as many of the vitamins, minerals and antioxidants required to nourish ourselves properly. Sticking to the same types of vegetables or fruits can be quite limiting and doesn't always provide us with the full spectrum of nutrients we need.

Phytonutrients

Vegetables and fruits contain different **phytonutrients** depending on their colour, so to obtain a wider range of phytonutrients it makes sense to eat a wider range of colours throughout the week. Phytonutrients are wonderful compounds that are found in colourful natural foods which help our body to 'mop up' harmful free radicals which can cause damage to our cells and long-term health. Free radicals are most commonly produced by chemicals such as in tobacco, pesticides, some cosmetic and cleaning products, burnt meats, stress and inflammation.

Phytonutrients (found in the colours of natural foods) have many benefits for health including immune modulation, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. They also act as prebiotics which support the microbes in the gut.

We can make sure that we are **eating a rainbow** by choosing from the following foods. Remember to keep your ratio of fruit to vegetables in favour of the veg. So, if you are aiming for '5 a day', then 3 veg: 2 fruit. Aiming for 9+ a day is our goal. You could start by adding a different colour each day or even add 3 different colours to each meal!

Red Foods

Red foods help to reduce the build-up of plaque in arteries and lower blood pressure. They can bolster immunity by being a terrific source of vitamin C with a touch of vitamin A, potassium and fibre. Also, tomatoes (when cooked) are rich in lycopene, an antioxidant that fights skin ageing and may be beneficial against cancer and heart disease.

- Red pepper
- Strawberries
- Cherries
- Raspberries
- Watermelon
- Tomatoes
- Beets
- Cranberries
- Pink grapefruit
- Pomegranate

Orange Foods

Orange foods are rich in vitamin C and Beta Carotene – an orange pigment which is converted to vitamin A when it enters the bloodstream. Helping to protect against cancer and cardiovascular disease, vitamins A and C also boost the immune system and protect the eyes!

- Carrot
- Papaya
- Pumpkin
- Orange tomatoes
- Butternut Squash

- Sweet Potatoes
- Cantaloupe
- Oranges

Yellow Foods

Along with antioxidants, yellow foods also have an abundance of vitamin C. Studies suggest that these brightly coloured nutrients will help your heart, vision, digestion and immune system. Other benefits of naturally yellow foods include maintenance of healthy skin, wound healing, and stronger bones and teeth.

- Corn
- Squash
- Yellow pepper
- Yellow tomatoes
- Banana
- Lemons

Green Foods

Avocados contain lutein, an antioxidant that protects eye health, and they're rich in vitamin E which is protective for the skin, eyes and heart. They also contain brain-protective good fats. All cruciferous vegetables contain cancer-fighting plant compounds and vitamin C. Kale especially has bone-boosting vitamin K, vision- and immune-boosting vitamin A.

- Avocado
- Kale
- Brussels sprouts
- Kiwis
- Green beans
- Basil
- Asparagus

Purple Foods

When you think blue/purple, think super food! The colour of these fruits and vegetables signify potent phytonutrients which are extremely protective for the human body. Choosing to add purple fruits and vegetables to your diet as much as possible is a smart decision for better health.

- Purple cabbage
- Aubergine
- Plums
- Blueberries
- Figs
- Beetroot
- Purple kale

