

Eat A Rainbow Of Colours

Different colours indicate a variety of nutrients in fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables generally contain little fat, cholesterol or sodium and provide complex carbohydrates, fiber and nutrients. Most are low in calories, and they contain natural sugar, as opposed to refined sugar, which can cause abrupt fluctuations in your blood sugar level. Different colours indicate different nutrient profiles, so focus on getting a little of each color in your diet every day to maximize the nutritional benefits.

Red

Red fruits and vegetables, such as raspberries, tomatoes, guava, watermelon, red cabbage, kidney beans, cherries, strawberries and beets, are likely to be rich in the antioxidants lycopene and anthocyanins, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A medium raw tomato provides 3.2 micrograms of lycopene, a carotenoid that helps your body make vitamin A. Although there is no set daily value for lycopene, MayoClinic.com recommends getting 2 to 30 milligrams per day.

Orange and Yellow

Most orange and yellow fruits and vegetables are rich in beta-carotene, which your body converts to vitamin A, a nutrient that not only improves night vision, but also helps keep your skin, teeth and bones healthy. They also contain folate, an antioxidant that prevents neural tube defects in unborn infants. A 2-cup serving of sliced cantaloupe provides 541 micrograms of vitamin A, more than 100 percent of your recommended daily intake of 500 micrograms, and 67 of the 320 micrograms of folate you need each day.

Green

Green vegetables are good for your eyes, bones and teeth, and their vitamin K content helps your blood to clot properly. A 2-cup serving of raw spinach provides 290 of the 90 to 120 micrograms of vitamin K you need each day. These foods' antioxidant vitamins, particularly vitamins C and E, may lower your risk of chronic diseases. They provide the phytonutrients lutein and zeaxanthin, which may protect you from vision loss due to eye diseases such as macular degeneration, according to North Dakota State University.

Blue and Purple

Blue and purple fruits and vegetables contain anthocyanins, natural plant pigments with powerful antioxidant properties that may reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease. They also contain flavonoids and ellagic acid, compounds that may destroy cancer cells, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research. The anthocyanins and ellagic acid in blueberries have been shown to fight cancer cells in the lungs, stomach, breasts and pancreas. Anthocyanins and ellagic acid also show anti-inflammatory properties that may prevent cancers of the esophagus and colon.

White

White fruits and vegetables, including apples, pears, bananas, cauliflower and cucumbers, are high in dietary fiber, helping to protect you from high cholesterol, and antioxidant-rich flavonoids, such as quercetin, which is abundant in apples and pears. They may also lower your risk of stroke.

Reference: The Mayo Health Clinic System

