

September Nutrition News: Eating the Rainbow



When aiming for a healthy dietary intake, we all know eating fruits and vegetables is key. However, it is also important to choose a wide variety of fruits and vegetables to obtain an array of important phytonutrients. Phytonutrients are bioactive plant-derived compounds associated with positive health benefits. We can obtain this variety by trying to include as many plant-based colors in our meals and snacks as possible. Each color provides many health benefits, however, no one color is superior to another, which is why variety is so important. This is often referred to as “Eating the Rainbow”.

WHAT THE COLORS MEAN

RED fruits and vegetables contain many antioxidants that support heart health and help protect cells from damage. Some are particularly rich in lycopene, a scavenger of gene-damaging free radicals that seem to protect against prostate cancer as well as heart and lung disease.

Examples: red bell peppers, tomatoes, beets, watermelon, strawberries, apples, red grapes, raspberries, cherries, pomegranates, cranberries

ORANGE/YELLOW fruits and vegetables provide beta-carotene and vitamins A and C to support healthy vision, skin, and immune function.

Examples: butternut squash, oranges, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, orange bell peppers, peaches, cantaloupe, yellow bell peppers, pineapple, bananas, lemons, corn, potatoes, summer squash, mango

GREEN fruits and vegetables are rich in cancer-blocking chemicals like sulforaphane, isothiocyanates, and indoles, which inhibit the action of carcinogens (cancer-causing compounds).

Examples: spinach, broccoli, swiss chard, brussels sprouts, zucchini, kiwi, honeydew melon, avocado, kale

BLUE/PURPLE fruits and vegetables contain anthocyanins and proanthocyanidins that may help support brain health, cognitive function and healthy aging.

Examples: blueberries, eggplant, cabbage, grapes, blackberries, plums, figs, prunes, purple potatoes

Tip: Try to avoid peeling foods when possible (such as apples, peaches, eggplants etc.). Edible skins are the most concentrated source of beneficial chemicals!

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