

Disease-fighting vegetable medley



Variety, the spice of life, is also the path to good health. In recent years researchers have shown that various phytochemicals—substances that plants use to ward off insects, viruses, bacteria, and cell mutations—can lessen disease risk in people and animals who dine on the plants containing them. Phytochemicals affect the color of many vegetables and fruits; hence the advice to eat a rainbow of produce has replaced the old view that green is supreme.

Now, new research suggests that combining certain fruits and vegetables in a single meal boosts their disease-fighting power. Laboratory animals fed a combination of tomatoes and broccoli had markedly less prostate-tumor growth than those that ate either food alone, according to a recently presented study scheduled to appear in the *Journal of Nutrition*.

That's good reason to fill your diet with dishes that combine a wide variety of vegetables and fruits. Choose real foods over supplements of lutein, lycopene, or other phytonutrients, so that you get the

color me healthful

	PRODUCE EXAMPLES	PHYTOCHEMICAL	SOME POSSIBLE BENEFITS
Red	Guava, pink grapefruit, tomatoes	Lycopene	Reduced lung and prostate-cancer risk.
	Beets, kidney beans, raspberries, red apples, red cabbage	Anthocyanins (red)	Lowered blood pressure; protection against circulatory problems.
Orange/ yellow	Apricots, butternut squash, cantaloupe, carrots, mangos, peaches, pumpkin, sweet potatoes	Beta-carotene	Reduced risk of cancer and heart disease; maintenance of good vision; increased infection-fighting ability.
	Apricots, clementines, grapefruit, lemons, nectarines, oranges	Bioflavonoids	Together with the vitamin C in these fruits, reduced cancer and heart-risk; healthy skin, bones, and teeth.
Green	Broccoli, green peas, honeydew melon, kale, kiwi, leafy greens	Lutein	Maintenance of good vision; reduced risk of macular degeneration, cataracts, and colon cancer.
	Arugula, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, Swiss chard	Glucosinolates	Reduced risk of breast, prostate, and stomach cancers.
Purple	Blackberries, black currants, blueberries, other purple produce	Anthocyanins (purple)	Reduced risk of cancer, heart disease, and age-related memory loss.
	Eggplant, plums, prunes, raisins	Phenolics	Slowing of some effects of aging.
White	Garlic, leeks, white onions	Allicin	Reduced risk of cancer spread, heart disease; enhanced infection defenses.

whole range of plant chemicals—plus the fiber, which reduces the risk of some cancers, helps the heart, and aids in weight control. The table above lists the possible benefits of some phytochemicals in different-colored produce.

"The bottom line is to combine not just tomatoes and broccoli, but a range of different vegetables because of the ways they may interact," says Jeff Prince, vice president for education at the nonprofit American Institute for Cancer Research.

names&claims

SUPER SPROUTS

"Not all broccoli sprouts are created equal." So claims the Web site for BroccoSprouts, a brand of sprouts developed by nutrition researchers at Johns Hopkins University. The three-day-old broccoli-seed sprouts are "guaranteed" to contain at least 20 times the level of the disease-fighting chemical sulforaphane as mature broccoli.

Are these designer sprouts really more beneficial than other brands of broccoli babies? Are they really that good for you?

There is substantial lab evidence that the sulforaphane in broccoli helps protect cells against cancer. It's also been found to kill *H. pylori* bacteria, which can cause ulcers and stomach cancer.

When Johns Hopkins scientists discovered in 1997 that broccoli sprouts had far more phytochemicals per ounce than mature broccoli, they decided to patent their version of the food. The BroccoSprouts brand guarantees sulforaphane levels by



SPROUT RESEARCHER Paul Tatalay, M.D., helped identify the cancer-fighting phytochemicals in broccoli.

using a standard seed and culture method and periodic testing.

While there's no direct evidence that higher doses of sulforaphane translate into more cancer protection, the sprouts are unlikely to harm you—and they have a peppery, quite unbroccoli-like flavor. To avoid the small risk of foodborne illness associated with raw sprouts, rinse sprouts before eating them. For additional protection, dunk them in boiling water for 10 seconds.

CR's take: Boon for broccoli haters.

DID YOU KNOW?

Apple power for your lungs
Apples may offer significant protection for the lungs, helping to reduce coughing and phlegm in people with chronic lung problems, according to an August 2004 study by researchers in the U.S. and Singapore. Apples outpaced 14 other fruits in this study of 49,000 people. Previous studies have suggested that apples may protect against asthma and lung cancer. And a wealth of research has tied the fiber and flavonoids—beneficial plant compounds—abundant in apples to reduced risk of heart disease and several cancers. Eat your apple (washed) with the skin on to get its full fiber content: 3.3 grams on average, twice as much as in the peeled fruit.