

THE Wellness Minute

Nutrition Series: 3.1
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Eat By the Colors, Part 1

We've All Heard "Paint By The Numbers", But What Is Meant By "Eat By The Colors"?

Imagine going through your life only eating beige food... day in and day out... not only would it get boring, but you'd also soon realize that your food was not providing you with many phytochemicals that have health benefits. In fact, each color of fruit or vegetable provides a different family of healthy chemistry. Fresh food is divided today in 7 groups by color.

Blue/Purple: The blue/purple hues in foods are due primarily to their anthocyanin content. The darker the blue hue, the higher the phytochemical concentration in the food. Anthocyanins are antioxidants that are particularly heart healthy and may help support healthy blood pressure. These fruits with their distinctive colors may help ward off heart disease by preventing clot formation. They may also help lower risk of cancer. **Examples:** eggplant (skin), blueberries, blackberries, prunes, plums, and pomegranates.

Green: The natural plant pigment chlorophyll colors green fruits and vegetables. "In our system, the green foods represented those foods rich in isothiocyanates, which induce enzymes in the liver that assist the body in removing potentially carcinogenic compounds," says Bowerman, author of "**What Color Is Your Diet**". Experts agree that cruciferous veggies such as

broccoli and cabbage contain the phytochemicals indoles and isothiocyanates, which may have anticancer properties. Green vegetables are excellent sources of vitamin K, folic acid, potassium, as well as carotenoids. Folic acid is needed to prevent neural tube defects during pregnancy, and vitamin K is essential in blood clot formation. Diets high in potassium are associated with lowering blood pressure, and there is an inverse relationship between cruciferous vegetables and cancer, especially colon and bladder cancers. In addition, sulforaphane, a phytochemical present in cruciferous vegetables, was found to detoxify cancer-causing chemicals before they do damage to the body.

Examples: Broccoli, cabbage, bok choy, Brussels sprouts, kale, and chard.



Each day as you plan your meals try to include as many different colors of fresh foods into your diet. Every color benefits your health in one way or another. Stay tuned for the next issue where we examine yellow/green and red foods and their benefits.