



EAT THE RAINBOW

Benefits of eating the rainbow

Eating the rainbow involves eating fruits and vegetables of different colours every day. Plants contain different pigments, or phytonutrients, which give them their colour. Different-coloured plants are linked to higher levels of specific nutrients and health benefits.

While eating more vegetables and fruit is always a good idea, focusing on eating a variety of colours will increase your intake of different nutrients to benefit various areas of your health.

Almost all studies show benefits from regularly eating colourful fruits and vegetables with virtually no downsides. By getting a variety of colour in your diet, you're giving your body an array of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals to benefit your health.

Each colour represents a different phytochemical and set of nutrients that may benefit your health.

Red

- Tomatoes, tomato paste, tomato sauce, watermelon, pink guava, pink grapefruit
- **Main phytonutrient:** lycopene (from the vitamin A family)
- **Health benefits:** anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, may benefit heart health, may reduce sun-related skin damage, may lower your risk of certain cancers

Orange and yellow

- Carrots, sweet potatoes, yellow peppers, bananas, pineapple, tangerines, pumpkin, winter squash, corn
- **Main phytonutrients:** carotenoids (e.g., beta carotene, alpha carotene, beta cryptoxanthin), which belong to the vitamin A family
- **Health benefits:** anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, may benefit heart health, supports eye health, may lower your risk of cancer

Green

- Spinach, kale, broccoli, avocados, asparagus, green cabbage, Brussels sprouts, green herbs
- **Main phytonutrients:** Leafy greens: chlorophyll and carotenoids. Cruciferous greens (e.g., broccoli, cabbage): indoles, isothiocyanates, glucosinolates
- **Health benefits:** anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and cruciferous veggies, in particular, may lower your risk of cancer and heart disease

Blue and purple

- Blueberries, blackberries, Concord grapes, red/purple cabbage, eggplant, plums, elderberries
- **Main phytonutrients:** anthocyanins
- **Health benefits:** anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, may benefit heart health, may lower your risk of neurological disorders, may improve brain function, may lower your risk of type 2 diabetes, may lower your risk of certain cancers

Dark red

- Beets, prickly pears, red grapes
- **Main phytonutrients:** betalains
- **Health benefits:** anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, may lower your risk of high blood pressure, may benefit heart health, may lower your risk of certain cancers, may support athletic performance through increased oxygen uptake

White and brown

- Cauliflower, garlic, leeks, onions, mushrooms, daikon radish, parsnips, white potatoes
- **Main phytonutrients:** anthoxanthins (flavonols, flavones), allicin
- **Health benefits:** anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, may lower your risk of colon and other cancers, may benefit heart health

Remembering to eat the rainbow every day is a great and simple way to make sure you're getting a variety of nutrients into your diet.

Fruits and vegetables of different colours give various health benefits. By ensuring you're eating a few coloured fruits or vegetables at each meal, you're setting yourself up for good health.

To eat the rainbow, work toward adding at least two or three coloured fruits or vegetables to each meal and at least one or two to each snack. Each colour represents a different set of nutrients that may benefit your health.

| Main vitamins and minerals | Red | Orange & Yellow | Green | Blue & Purple | Dark Red | White & Brown |
|----------------------------|-----|-----------------|-------|---------------|----------|---------------|
| Fibre | | X | X | X | X | X |
| folate | X | X | X | | X | X |
| magnesium | | | X | | X | X |
| manganese | | | | X | X | X |
| potassium | X | X | X | X | X | |
| vitamin A | X | X | X | | | |
| vitamin C | X | x | | X | | |
| vitamin K1 | X | | X | X | | X |
| Vitamin B6 | | | | X | X | X |

HOW TO DO IT

The great thing about eating the rainbow is it's easy to implement. Incorporate two to three different-coloured fruits or vegetables at every meal and at least one at every snack. While you don't have to eat every single colour every day, try to get them into your diet as often as you can. Here are some ideas:

Breakfast

- an omelette with spinach, mushrooms, and orange bell peppers
- a smoothie with mango, banana, and dragonfruit
- a Greek yogurt bowl with blueberries, kiwi, and strawberries
- a breakfast egg sandwich with tomato, leafy greens, and avocado

Lunch or dinner

- a mixed salad with green cabbage, lettuce, apple, shredded carrots, red pepper, cucumbers, and cherry tomatoes paired with a protein source (e.g., kidney beans, chickpeas, grilled chicken, salmon)
- chicken with roasted sweet potatoes, Brussels sprouts, and garlic
- homemade soup with canned tomatoes, onion, garlic, chopped carrots, white potatoes or parsnip, and kale
- a goat cheese salad with pickled beets, arugula, avocado, and pecans
- spaghetti with tomato sauce, mushrooms, and zucchini

Snacks

- an apple with peanut butter
- red pepper slices with hummus
- grapes and cheese
- a green smoothie or juice
- a banana
- blueberries and yogurt
- broccoli, carrots, and dip
- dried mango slices
- 4–5 longan or lychee fruit
- edamame pods
- celery and melted cheese

The opportunities to include fruits and vegetables into your diet are endless. If you live or work in an area without fresh produce year-round, try frozen fruits and vegetables for some meals. They're equally nutritious, accessible, and affordable.

Eat two to three different-coloured fruits or vegetables at every meal, as well as one to two at every snack.