

# Benefits of Eating the Rainbow

**Did you know that all plant foods have the ability to improve our health?**

**PHYTOCHEMICALS** are naturally occurring plant chemicals and are responsible for the color, smell and taste of each plant. They are also responsible for many of the health benefits we get from eating plant foods (includes fruit, vegetables, nuts/seeds, whole grains, beans, herbs, spices).

Each plant-food contains many phytochemicals, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that work to improve our health. Yet some of the most potent health benefits of a food come from the particular phytochemicals, especially those responsible for the color of the plant.

Because each phytochemical provides different health benefits, we can maximize our health by getting in a variety of colorful phytochemicals each day. This can be easily done by eating a variety of colorful plant foods each day, or simply put - **EAT THE RAINBOW!**

## Breaking it Down by COLOR

Because phytochemicals act in so many ways, and there can be hundreds of phytochemicals in a single plant, breaking down the specific health benefits for each color can be a bit tricky. Many of the benefits overlap and can be seen with many colors (like fighting cancer or protecting against heart disease).

This list shows just a few of the most common benefits we see with each color/phytochemical but keep in mind there are many, many more and we are discovering new ones each day!

## RED (Lycopene)

- Keeps our heart healthy and decreases risk of stroke
- Prevents and even fights cancer, especially prostate and breast
- Good for urinary tract health and for memory!

## ORANGE/YELLOW (Carotenoids)

- Decreases inflammation in the body and helps prevent cancer
- Keeps our immune system strong and our skin healthy
- Good for our vision - helps us see at night!

## GREEN (Lutein)

- Protects our eyes by preventing cataracts and slowing age-related macular degeneration (natural worsening of eyesight as we get older)
- Also contains Folic Acid, an important nutrient for having healthy babies (prevents neural tube defects)
- Keeps our bones, teeth and nails strong and also prevents blood clots!

## BLUE/PURPLE (Anthocyanins)

- Helps us age gracefully by improving our memory and keeping our skin looking young
- Reduces blood pressure and lowers the risk of stroke and heart disease
- Helps fight cancers, especially those in the GI tract (mouth, esophagus, colon)!

## WHITE/TAN (Allicin)

- Lowers cholesterol and blood pressure
- Keeps our bones strong and healthy
- Helps fight cancers, especially stomach cancer!