



# EAT THE Rainbow

Nutritional Therapist Heather Cuthbert tells us how to obtain a wide spectrum of health-promoting nutrients from your diet.

## THE LINK BETWEEN COLOUR AND NUTRITIONAL VALUE

The colour of your food can tell you a lot about its nutritional value and eating a variety of colours is a brilliant way to get as many of those vitamins and minerals into the body as possible.

Certain colours of foods can indicate an abundance in specific nutrients. For example, green and purple fruits and vegetables are said to be high in Vitamins C and K. Whereas, yellow and orange fruits and vegetables are great sources of Vitamins C and A.

Plants derive their colours from various phytochemicals, also known as phytonutrients ('phyto' is the Greek word for plant). Phytochemicals contain natural chemicals that help protect the plant from any threats (bugs/germs/environmental hazards etc.) and, not only do they award benefit to the plants but they also provide benefits to those who eat these plants! This is because they contain antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-carcinogenic properties.

## ANTIOXIDANTS

Antioxidants are phytochemicals, vitamins and other nutrients that protect our cells from damage caused by free radicals, also known as oxidative damage.

## WHAT ARE 'FREE RADICALS' I HEAR YOU SAY?

Free radicals are formed as part of our natural metabolism but also because of the day to day environmental factors such as pollution, smoking, radiation, preservatives, pesticides, excessive stress, excessive sunlight, etc. Free radicals are molecules that react easily with important molecules in our body, damaging cells and structures around them. Free radicals have one electron too many or one too less, making them unstable so they try and stabilise themselves by either taking electrons from another molecule or giving electrons away. In the process, they fire charges that change the chemical structure of the donor molecule, which can create a domino effect as each donor molecule

becomes a new free radical, leaving a trail of biological damage behind. The result of this progressive damage is our normal aging process; changes in skin colour, texture and the appearance of wrinkles.

## THAT'S WHY ANTIOXIDANTS ARE SO IMPORTANT!

These fantastic little substances wander through your body acting as a defence system and preventing cellular damage. Antioxidants are able to neutralise free radicals, without turning into one themselves. So it is essential that we supply our bodies with plenty of these key antioxidants.

## MY RAINBOW CHART

### Red

Fruits & Vegetables  
Cranberry, Redcurrant, Red Pepper, Radish, Red Apple, Pomegranate, Red Cabbage, Raspberry, Rhubarb, Cherry, Strawberry, Tomato, Beetroot, Watermelon, Red Grapes, Red Onion.

Possible Nutrients  
Resveratrol, Capsaicin, Lycopene, Phytoene, Phytofluene, Vitamin E.

### Orange

Fruits & Vegetables  
Potato, Orange, Pepper, Mango, Turmeric, Tangerine, Kumquat, Grapefruit, Apricot, Peach, Pumpkin, Butternut Squash, Orange, Passion Fruit, Pawpaw, Cantaloupe, Carrot, Nectarine.

Possible Nutrients  
Alpha and Beta-Carotene, Vitamin A, Cryptoxanthin, Flavonoids, Carotenoids, Vitamin C.

### Yellow

Fruits & Vegetables  
Yellow Pepper, Shallot, Onion, Sweet Potato, Sweet Corn, Lemon, Gooseberry, Banana, Honeydew, Pineapple.

Possible Nutrients  
Bromelain, Limonoids, Flavonoids, Vitamin C, Vitamin A.

### Green

Fruits & Vegetables  
Sukuma Wiki, Broccoli, Cabbage, Spinach, Kale, Brussel Sprout, Leek, Swiss Chard, Artichoke, Asparagus, Green Bean, Broad Bean, French Bean, Green Pepper, Pea, Mange Tout, Watercress, Spring Onion, Courgette, Marrow, Rocket, Cucumber, Bok Choy, Lettuce, Celery, Avocado, Fennel, Herbs (Coriander, Mint, Basil, Sage, Thyme, Parsley, Dill), Lime, Kiwi Fruit, Green Apple, Pear, Grape, Melon.

Possible Nutrients  
Catechins, Chlorophyll, Isothiocyanates, Vitamin C, Glucosinolates, Indole-3 Carbinol, Folic Acid, Vitamin K, Polyphenols, Sinigrin, Sulfuraphane.

### Blue/Indigo/Violet

Fruits & Vegetables  
Beetroot, Purple Sprouting Broccoli, Red Cabbage, Aubergine, Red Onion, Grape, Blackcurrant, Cherry, Blueberry, Plum, Fig.

Possible Nutrients  
Anthocyanins, Ellagic Acid, Flavonoids, Polyphenols, Vitamin C, Vitamin K.

In short, adding a variety of colourful produce to your diet is an easy way to get a

lot of vitamins and minerals into the body, without putting in too much effort beyond selecting a range of colours. However, not all phytonutrients give colour, so it is really important not to overlook the off-white foods as well, for example, garlic, onions and leeks, which are rich in powerful sulphuric phytonutrients and help support the liver detoxification processes.

## 'EAT THE RAINBOW' MEAL IDEAS

Breakfast: Cherry tomato, fresh herbs and spinach omelette with a green juice.  
Mid-morning snack: Tangerine with a handful of unroasted, unsalted, Brazil nuts.  
Lunch: Feta cheese, butternut squash and beetroot salad.  
Mid-afternoon snack: Carrot and red pepper sticks with guacamole.  
Dinner: Prawn stir-fry (made with bak choy, green beans, baby corn, yellow pepper and bean sprouts).

Breakfast: Very berry protein smoothie.  
Mid-morning snack: A small tub of olives.  
Lunch: Pea and mint soup served with rye bread and sliced avocado.  
Mid-afternoon snack: Apple slices dipped in almond butter.  
Dinner: Thai chicken curry with brown rice.

## About the author

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