

## ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

# Does eating the rainbow improve your health?

*Discover the magically delicious health benefits of fruits & vegetables*

When most people hear "eat the rainbow," they picture something like Lucky Charms cereal. You know, those colorful marshmallows floating in a bowl of milk.

Magically delicious, sure. But the rainbow nutritionists talk about looks a lot different.

**It's fruits and vegetables.** And the magic isn't in the marshmallows. It's in the color.



## The Rainbow Effect Can Improve Your Health

Fruits and vegetables get their colors from natural compounds called phytonutrients.<sup>1</sup>

- Different colors contain different phytonutrients.
- And different phytonutrients do different things for your health.

That's why variety matters. Each color is basically



Eating wide variety of fruits and vegetables can help lower the risk for heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer, and early death.



nature's way of packaging a different set of health benefits: The rainbow effect.

**One recent study found that eating a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables can help lower the risk for:<sup>2</sup>**

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Early death
- Certain types of cancer



## How to Eat a Rainbow of Fruits and Vegetables

Each color group of fruits and vegetables contains different nutrients that work together to protect your health.

Here's what to look for:

 **Red.** If you want to protect your heart, start with red.

Tomatoes, strawberries, watermelon, and red bell peppers are rich in lycopene and anthocyanins.

These compounds may also help reduce the risk of certain cancers, including prostate cancer.



► **RAINBOW**

 **Orange and yellow.**

Want better eyesight and healthier skin?

Start with carrots, sweet potatoes, mangoes, and yellow squash.

These foods are loaded with beta-carotene, a nutrient your body converts to vitamin A.

 **Green.** There's a reason nutritionists never stop talking about leafy greens.

Spinach, broccoli, kale, and Brussels sprouts are packed with folate, chlorophyll, and compounds that support bone health, detoxification, and cancer prevention.

 **Blue and purple.** Don't overlook blueberries, grapes, eggplant, and purple cabbage.

These foods get their deep color from anthocyanins, which are linked to better brain health, less inflammation, and a lower risk of heart disease.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends most adults consume:  
Fruit: 1.5 to 2 cups of fruits per day. Vegetables: 2 to 3 cups per day.



 **White and tan.** Garlic and onions aren't glamorous, but don't underestimate them.

Along with cauliflower and mushrooms, they contain allicin and other compounds that support immune function and help lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

**Eat the Rainbow: So how do you put this into practice?**

Start simple.

- Add one new fruit or vegetable to each meal.
- Swap plain lettuce for mixed greens.
- Add berries to your yogurt.
- Toss sliced bell peppers into your stir-fry.

The more colors on your plate, the more your body benefits.

Magically delicious and healthy? Fruits and vegetables have Lucky Charms beat.

**References**

1. McManus, K.D. (2019). Phytonutrients: Paint your plate with the colors of the rainbow. Harvard Health Publishing. From: <https://tinyurl.com/cjanfnnd>
2. Blumfield, M., et al. (2022). Should We 'Eat a Rainbow'? An Umbrella Review of the Health Effects of Colorful Bioactive Pigments in Fruits and Vegetables. *Molecules*, 27:13. From: <https://tinyurl.com/2fsx8dba>