

# DID YOU KNOW ??

*A weekly feature on the latest in cardiac health news*

Prevention, Education & Cardiac Rehabilitation

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## DID YOU KNOW...

# Each Colour Of Food Has Specific Nutrients Associated With It?

*By Tara McDougall*

Almost 25% of Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34 don't eat any fruits or vegetables on a daily basis, according to a study conducted for the Dietitians of Canada. Adding different fruits and vegetables to your meals and snacks is a good way to ensure you get your 5-10 servings of fruits and vegetables a day, which is the recommended daily intake from The Canadian Food Guide. Do you know what the different colours of food mean?

**Red fruits and vegetables** get their red colour from natural plant pigments called lycopene or anthocyanins. Lycopene is found in: tomatoes, watermelon and pink grapefruit. It may help reduce risk of several types of cancer. A specific link has been found for helping reduce prostate cancer. Lycopene is also in foods containing cooked tomatoes, such as spaghetti sauce. Anthocyanins are in strawberries, raspberries, red grapes and other red fruits and vegetables. Anthocyanins act as a powerful antioxidant to help protect your body's cells from damage. Antioxidants are also linked with keeping your heart healthy.

**Orange and yellow fruits and vegetables** are coloured by natural plant pigments called carotenoids. Foods high in carotenoids can help reduce risk of cancer, heart disease and can improve immune system function. Beta-carotene, an organic compound found in orange and yellow fruits, is converted to vitamin A, which helps maintain healthy mucous membranes and healthy eyes. It can be found in abundance in sweet potatoes, pumpkins and carrots. Carotenoids have been found to be good for your heart. A recent study found that men with high cholesterol who ate plenty of vegetables high in carotenoids had a 36 percent lower chance of heart attack and death than their counterparts who did not eat vegetables.

**Green fruits and vegetables** are coloured by natural plant pigment called chlorophyll. Lutein, a naturally occurring carotenoid is in spinach and other dark leafy greens, green peppers, peas, cucumber and celery. Lutein works in conjunction with zeaxanthin, found in corn, red peppers, oranges, grapes and egg yolks to help keep your eyes healthy. Working together, these chemicals can help reduce risk of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration, which can lead to blindness if untreated. Indole, an organic compound found in broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and other vegetables

in the cabbage family, may help protect against some types of cancer. Leafy greens such as spinach and broccoli are excellent sources of folate, a B vitamin that helps reduce risk of birth defects.

**Blue and purple fruits and vegetables** are coloured by natural plant pigments called anthocyanins. Anthocyanins are found in blueberries, grapes and raisins. Anthocyanins act as powerful antioxidants that protect the body's cells from damage. They may also help reduce the risk of cancer, stroke and heart disease. It has been noted that eating blueberries are linked with improved memory function and healthy aging.

**White fruits and vegetables** are coloured by pigments called anthoxanthins. They may contain chemicals such as allicin, which can help lower cholesterol and blood pressure. Allicin may also help reduce the risk of stomach cancer and heart disease. Some members of the white group, such as bananas and potatoes, are good sources of the mineral potassium, as well.

People, who eat more generous amounts of fruits and vegetables as part of their healthy diet, are reducing their risk of; stroke, type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, heart disease and high blood pressure.

## **Tips to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables in your diet**

- Keep cleaned and cut fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator so they are easy to grab as a quick snack
- Choose vegetables with low-fat dip for a snack.
- Add vegetables to casseroles, stews and soups.
- Drink 100% fruit juice instead of fruit-flavoured drinks or pop which contain added sugar.
- Have fruit for dessert.
- Keep a bowl of apples, bananas and/or oranges on the table for quick grabbing
- Choose a side salad made with a variety of leafy greens in place of French fries.
- Bake with raisin, date or prune puree to reduce fat and increase fibre.
- Add lettuce, onions, peppers and/or tomatoes to sandwiches.
- Order veggie toppings on your pizza instead of extra meat or cheese
- Enjoy fruit smoothies for breakfast or snacks.
- Pack fresh or dried fruit for quick snacks

## **Colourful Food Recipe**

### **Three Fruit Yogurt Shake**

2 cups low-fat vanilla yogurt

1 cup fresh blueberries, frozen

1 cup fresh peach slices, frozen

1 (8-ounce) can unsweetened pineapple chunks, drained and frozen

## **Preparation**

Process all ingredients in a blender until smooth, stopping to scrape down sides. Serve immediately.

## **References:**

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3. College Media Network, (2009). Canadian Youth not Eating Enough Fruits and Vegetables: Study. Retrieved from:<http://www.theconcordian.com/canadian-youth-not-eating-enough-fruits-and-vegetables-study-1.858658>

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