

Eat the Rainbow: Benefits of a Rainbow Plate

“Eating the rainbow” or varying the colors on your plate is important for health because it diversifies the nutrients you are consuming. The Mediterranean diet and other gold standard diets focus on whole grains, nuts, seeds, fruits, and vegetables. The main health components of these foods come from their colors. Phytochemicals are responsible for the color, smell, and taste of the plant. Below are more details of phytochemicals and why they are so important.



What are Phytochemicals?

Not only are phytochemicals responsible for the color, taste, and smell of a plant, but they also correlate to health benefits. Each plant can contain hundreds of phytochemicals, and here is a list of the most common:

Red (Lycopene)

- Heart healthy, decreases risk of stroke
- Helps to prevent and fight certain types of cancers (prostate and breast)

Examples: raspberries, tomatoes, peppers, strawberries, watermelon, cherries

Orange/Yellow (Carotenoids)

- Decreases inflammation
- Can help prevent cancer
- Examples: carrots, bananas, lemons, pumpkins, oranges, squash, mango



Green (Lutein)

- Keeps bones, teeth, and nails strong
- Prevents blood clots
- Examples: asparagus, broccoli, cucumber, green beans, spinach, avocado, kiwi, apples, asparagus, cabbage

Blue/Purple (Anthocyanins)

- Reduces blood pressure, helps to lower the risk of stroke and heart disease
- Helps to fight cancers of the GI tract (mouth, esophagus, and colon)
- Examples: eggplant, cabbage, berries, grapes, red onion, plums, prunes



White/Tan (Allicin)

- Helps to fight stomach cancer
- Lowers cholesterol and blood pressure
- Examples: cauliflower, garlic, onions, leeks, ramps, scallions, shallots



- 1 large yellow bell pepper, diced
- 2 cups chopped kale
- 1 ¼ cups chopped red cabbage
- 1 cup quartered grape tomatoes
- 1 cup mozzarella pearls
- ½ cup thinly sliced fresh basil
- 2 scallions, sliced

Directions:

Whisk vinegar, oil, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Add carrots, bell pepper, kale, cabbage, tomatoes, mozzarella, basil, and scallions. Toss to coat.



Ways to “Gather” the Rainbow:

You can snack on fruits or vegetables between meals or on the go. Look at your cart when shopping and see what types of colors you have. Branch out and try a different color of something. Seasonal produce is amazing for eating the rainbow, Farmers markets, fruit stands, and gardening is right around the corner! Frozen produce is always as nutritious if nothing fresh is available to you.

RECIPES

Eat the Rainbow Chopped Salad With Basil and Mozzarella

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup white balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 2 large carrots, diced

Protein Packed Rainbow Cottage Cheese Breakfast Bowl

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup low fat cottage cheese
- 1/4 cup your favorite granola
- 1/2 banana
- 1/2 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/2 kiwi, sliced
- 1/4 cup blueberries
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- Sprinkle of cinnamon

Directions:

Add cottage cheese to a bowl, and layer toppings.

To schedule an appointment with a Registered Dietitian, please obtain a referral for Medical Nutrition Therapy and contact:

Presbyterian: 412-692-4497

Shadyside: 412-623-2421