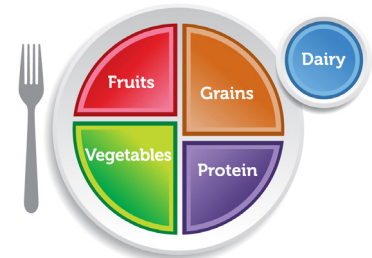




A Pioneering Area Agency on Aging

# Phytochemicals and Cancer



Choose **MyPlate**.gov

Phytochemicals are naturally occurring chemicals in plants and can be found in a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains and beans. Phytochemicals have many health benefits on the body, particularly in acting as an antioxidant. Benefits of phytochemicals include:

- Boosting the immune system.
- Reducing inflammation that stimulates cancer growth.
- Preventing substances we eat, drink, and breathe from becoming carcinogens.
- Slowing the growth of cancer cells.
- Reducing oxidative damage to cells that can initiate the growth of cancer.

## Types of Phytochemicals

Carotenoids include beta-carotene, lycopene and lutein. These are found in red, orange and green fruits and vegetables. Carotenoids act as an antioxidant in the body and may work to inhibit cancer cell growth. They can also help to boost your immune system, vision, skin and bone health. Examples of foods that contain carotenoids include broccoli, kale, carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, collard greens, winter squash, apricots, oranges and cantaloupe.

Lutein is a type of carotenoid that is found naturally in the macula of our eyes. Foods high in lutein may help to reduce the risk of chronic eye diseases, including macular degeneration and cataracts. Examples of good sources of lutein include spinach, kale, turnips, collard greens, broccoli, eggs and avocados.

Flavanoids are another type of phytochemical that work as an antioxidant in the body. They may help to stop inflammation and tumor growth. Foods high in flavonoids include apples, citrus fruits, berries, soybeans, soy products (tofu, soy milk, edamame), coffee and tea.

Resveratrol has the potential to reduce inflammation that can contribute to certain types of cancer and heart disease. Resveratrol can be found in red and purple grapes, blueberries, cranberries, peanuts, green tea and red wine.

## What You Can Do

Aim for a diet that is high in fruits and vegetables. This is a great way to ensure you are getting a lot of phytochemicals, but also a wide variety of nutrients! Choose bright-colored fruits and vegetables, which often have a higher nutritional value and are the best sources of phytochemicals.

Try something new! There are so many fresh fruits and vegetables out there! Try produce you may not have previously liked – your pallet may have changed over time. Make a goal to try something new each week.

Get creative with your cooking methods and seasonings! Lightly steam or roast your vegetables. Most phytochemicals do not do well under high temperatures. Season with a olive oil, fresh lemon, garlic, and any fresh or dried herbs.



This fact sheet is distributed to help you obtain useful information regarding available community services and is not an inclusive list of providers. The information is subject to change following publication.

# Phytochemicals

S R F Y Y Z U W A L X Z R J O  
R W I E Q N J B N I S Z H N D  
S S E X G R F H T P J T W Y A  
E V U E Y G L L I R C V C S C  
I O E O T D V N O J E W D A O  
R H P B V P A P X B P I R W V  
R B R O C C O L I C O O F A A  
E J V O H Z X T D N T B O P Y  
B J W W E N R F A E C Z Y R T  
E V D V I E O V N T H P P I J  
U M Z E N P A O T F O T O C R  
L L T A B L I G R A P E S O K  
B U A J F D G L H Q H Y S T D  
L M E O S T O R R A C W T S Y  
P X N L O R T A R E V S E R I

ANTIOXIDANT

APRICOTS

AVOCADO

BLUEBERRIES

BROCCOLI

CAROTENOIDS

CARROTS

EGG

FLAVANOIDS

GRAPES

LUTEIN

RESVERATROL

SPINACH

SWEET POTATOES