

POWER FOODS

Dietitians mantra is “everything in moderation”, “balance is what’s most important”, and “variety is the spice of life!” But there are some foods out there which are clear “winners”. They really pack a nutritional punch! Scientists have started to identify hundreds of natural chemicals in foods that seem to have preventive powers. Taking these compounds in dietary supplements might not do any good. It may be the combination of antioxidants, phytochemicals and fiber that work together to give the health benefits. Many of the very chemicals that make foods good for us are the ones that give food color. For optimum health, eat a rainbow of colors! Your plate should look like a box of crayons!

“MUST- HAVE” FOODS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Add these to your shopping list and get them into your grocery cart!!

1. Oats-The beta-glucan in whole oats can help lower cholesterol and fight heart disease. The soluble fiber also helps stabilize blood sugars and helps you feel full fast, which may help in weight control. The oat has a hard-to-find antioxidant called tocotrienols.
2. Tomatoes- Lycopene, a powerful antioxidant, is a carotenoid that fights the uncontrolled growth of cells into tumors. It fights cancer of the colon, bladder, prostate and pancreas. Processed tomato products such as tomato paste, catsup, spaghetti sauce are actually higher in lycopene content than fresh tomatoes.
3. Garlic- rich in allicin, which boosts immune function and reduces cancer risk, garlic also has strong anti-viral effects and has been shown to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
4. Salmon - Healthy omega-3 fats have been shown to turn on fat oxidation, decrease triglycerides and LDL “bad” cholesterol while raising levels of HDL “good” cholesterol and to stabilize blood sugars
5. Grapes/Red Wine- grape skins contain high concentration of resveratrol, which appears to block the formation of coronary artery plaque, as well as boosting HDL “good” cholesterol levels. Resveratrol has also been correlated with reduced tumor formation and growth.

6. Nuts- while they remain a potent source of fat, calories and sodium, nuts offer many benefits as well. With monounsaturated fat they lower triglycerides and LDL “bad” cholesterol while raising HDL “good” cholesterol. They contain vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant as well as the phytochemical ellagic acid that may help ward off heart disease and cancer.
7. Cruciferous vegetables- (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, bok choy) these are packed with vitamins and fiber but also contain indoles, sulforaphane and isothiocyanates which may protect you from breast, colon and stomach cancers
8. Green tea- it is loaded with polyphenols including one group, catechins, which seem to be important in cancer prevention and possibly the reduction of heart disease as well (new studies show black tea may be equally effective)
9. Blueberries- these may contain more antioxidants than any other food. They have anthocyanins which fight off heart disease and cancer and may also boost brainpower!
10. Soybeans- contains the powerful isoflavones which help stabilize hormone levels in women, may decrease the risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, and ovarian, breast and prostate cancer
11. Spinach- loaded with iron and folate as well as lutein and zeaxanthin, that seem to ward off macular degeneration, a leading cause of blindness (kale, Swiss chard, and collard and mustard greens may offer similar benefits)
12. Flaxseed- a unique source of lignans (fiber) which are believed to stop cells from turning cancerous. Also contains alpha-linolenic acid which offers many of the same benefits as omega 3’s found in fish oil (reduces triglycerides and LDL “bad” cholesterol while raising HDL “good”)

It’s important to remember that there are no “magic foods” and it’s your overall nutritional intake that really counts toward your health. If you have questions or are ready to make some changes in your diet, contact Registered Dietitian Sally Barclay in the ISU Nutrition Clinic for Employee Wellness at 294-9625 or barclay@iastate.edu