

# HEAL with *Fruits & Vegetables*



# Introduction

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Governments and health officials recommend getting five to seven portions of fruit and vegetable a day. The reason for this is that in the wild, we'd have actually survived from mostly fruits and vegetables, meaning that we're designed to consume at least that amount a day. This is why they contain so many important vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that are crucial to our health and wellbeing – we *evolved* together.

Each fruit and veg however has different things to offer, and by selecting precisely which you eat you get to pick and choose which benefits your body gets. Of course, some fruits and vegetables will provide many more benefits than others. In this short report, we'll take a look at some of the most powerful fruits and vegetables of all.

Here are some of the most powerful of them all.

## Apples

The saying goes that 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away', and while it's probably not 100% effective, eating one at least every day will give you a massive health boost. Not only are they tasty and easily portable, but they're also a great way to freshen yourself up and so rich in vitamins are they that you can almost feel yourself getting healthier. There are also a good selection of apples to choose from, green or red, granny smith or red delicious... there's an apple for everyone's tastes!

Apples are also a great source of fibre, both soluble and insoluble. These have different uses for the body and while the soluble fibre (another example of soluble fibre is protein) will help prevent the build of cholesterol and the risk of heart disease, insoluble fibre will provide you with bulk in the intestinal and digestive tract which will clean the system to help food travel through it more quickly and efficiently.

Apples, like oranges are also particularly known for their high quantity of vitamin C which helps the body to fight illness by boosting the immune system – and this is really where the saying comes from, vitamin C is a great

way to guard against colds, flu and other viruses. Furthermore, vitamin C is an antioxidant meaning that it helps protect the cell walls against mutation.

## Pears

Pear is a particularly tasty and soft fruit that is related to apples, evident by the core which contains the seeds. They are a great source of a large variety of vitamins and minerals including thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, vitamin B6, folate, vitamin C, calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. Not only do they have the benefits of the vitamin C and fibre but also vitamin B6, which is a great energy booster used for improving the body's utilisation of energy stored in carbs.

## Broccoli

When you're told to eat your greens, broccoli is often one of the common culprits, which is just as well considering the vast nutritional benefits it carries with it. In particular it is high in beta carotene (which is converted into vitamin A) and vitamin C as well as folic acid, calcium and fibre. It is actually particularly important as a source of calcium containing *almost* as much as a glass of milk making it great for those who don't eat dairy. This helps to build strong bones and connective tissue and promotes healthy nails and teeth. Furthermore, it strengthens contractions and beats high blood pressure and colon cancer.

Broccoli belongs to the cabbage family and provides many of the same benefits. A 'cruciferous vegetable' it contains important phytochemicals called 'indoles' and 'isothiocyanates' which helps protect against cancer. They're also high in iron which is crucial for the transport of oxygen around the body as the main compound in haemoglobin and myoglobin (the red blood cells). This provides us with oxidative energy and helps our body to deliver other essential nutrients.

## Cabbage

This list wouldn't be complete without cabbage which is one of the least calorific vegetables available. Some claims even state that chewing cabbage burns more calories than you gain from eating it! This makes it a 'negative calorie food' and great for dieting. Whether or not this is true, cabbage contains large amounts of glutamine – an amino acid with anti-inflammatory properties. Hence in 'folk' medicine cabbage is used to treat inflammation by being wrapped around affected areas – some even use it to treat sore

breasts for breast-feeding mothers! It is also a great source of calcium and iron – all the mineral benefits with none of the calorific cost.

## **Spinach**

Saving (one of) the best until last, Spinach will immediately increase your biceps by up to thirty percent and help you save the day... if Popeye is to be believed anyway... Actually, the rumour that spinach had such fantastic health properties came from a misplaced decimal point – though that isn't to say they aren't still highly useful.

Spinach is a great source of calcium and one of the best sources of iron. Its iron content as discussed is crucial for helping the transport of oxygen and nutrients around the blood and is the key compound in the red blood cells.

Iron is also useful however for strengthening bones, increasing muscle strength. Iron is often low in women who are going through PMT as it is lost in the blood. To check for low iron look at your nail beds and under your lower eyelid – if they look pale then you could do with some spinach! This iron however is non-heme iron, which essentially means it is best absorbed with vitamin C to get the full effects. So eat spinach along with other vegetables or fruits. Spinach is also rich in antioxidants as well as: vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K, magnesium, manganese, folate, iron, vitamin B2, calcium, potassium, vitamin B6, folic acid, copper, protein, phosphorus, zinc, niacin, selenium, omega-3 fatty acids and folic acid. Quite impressive. Be strong to the finish and eat your spinach!

## **Black Chokeberry**

Black chokeberry is another lesser-known superfood that can help to improve the digestive process, protect against free radicals, help with weight loss, improve eye health, combat cancer, help repair the body and more. Yep, it's yet another lesser-known superfood that can help you to feel and look better in a vast array of different ways.

Black chokeberries have a great ratio of calories to nutrients to begin with. They are rich in dietary fiber to help improve digestion and bowel movements, and they're also low in fat and calories. They help to boost digestion thanks to that fiber content which is able to sift through the bowels and intestinal systems in order to ensure everything is able to move freely.

There are dozens of different antioxidants packed into chokeberries, which include quercetin, to epicatechin, to caffeic acid, to lutein, to carotene.

But many of these incredibly beneficial nutrients also do a ton of other good throughout the body. Take that lutein for instance.

This substance which is also found in carrots has been shown in recent studies to help improve mitochondrial efficiency. Mitochondria are the energy factories of the cells which are involved in converting glucose into usable energy. When you increase the effectiveness of mitochondria, you boost your energy levels *and* help to prevent weight gain.

And when lutein was given to rats and mice, it was found that they would voluntarily run far greater distances, thereby burning a lot more calories than their non-lutein eating brethren. On top of this, lutein has also been demonstrated recently to be effective at increasing brain plasticity. In particular, lutein helps with the formation of new neural connections, particularly during the younger formative years of a child's life. This makes a lot of sense, given that lutein is also highly effective for eye health – and the eyes are often describes as being the only 'exterior parts of the brain'.

Specifically, lutein has been shown in studies to be effective at helping to combat macular degeneration and thereby ensure great vision well into old age. Epicatechin is an equally impressive compound. This is also found in dark chocolate and apple juice and has a host of incredible benefits for the body.

Firstly, epicatechin is what is known as a vasodilator. That means that it will increase the size of the veins and arteries, thereby allowing a great volume of blood to flow around the body with less effort. That has been shown to significantly boost athletic performance but also to improve recovery from injury as energy and nutrients are delivered more effectively to injuries. It may even boost brain function by helping with the delivery of oxygen to the brain – it's no surprise that you tend to be sharper and more focused when you eat right.

Epicatechin also raises nitric oxide (which is what causes the vasodilation) and this has other benefits too, such as increased production of satellite cells in the muscles. These help with muscle gain and strength.

We've only just touched on what black chokeberry can do for you – so get it in your diet!

# Prickly Pear Cactus

Prickly pear cactus is also referred to as opuntia, nopal, or paddle cactus. A rose by any other name, as they say! Whatever you call it, this is a food rich in potassium, calcium, iron, vitamin C, beta carotene and much more. This makes it a very nutritious food that may help to improve energy levels thanks to the content of iron which improves the formation of the red blood cells, alongside the content of potassium which can help to reduce cramping and help to ensure the muscles function optimally.

Prickly pear cactus is also very high in fiber and is effective at improving digestion and also creating the sensation of satiety so that you don't overeat. It's high in calcium too, which of course strengthens the bones but which is lesser known for its ability to improve tooth health, as well as to strengthen the connective tissue (the tendons and ligaments) and to thereby help prevent a whole host of injuries.

Another lesser known benefit of calcium is its ability to strengthen contractions, actually improving physical strength and athletic performance.

# Rose Hip

While many of us are not highly familiar with rose hips, they were actually very popular during World War 2 when citrus fruits such as oranges were in shorter supply. These are cherry-sized fruits that are left behind when the bloom has died. They are incredibly high in vitamin C, containing roughly four times more of this essential vitamin than blackcurrants. This makes it a fantastic source of antioxidants, making it yet another item on this list that can fortify your cells against the damaging effects of these highly reactive compounds.

You should never underestimate the value of anything high in vitamin C. Vitamin C is well known for its ability to fight off colds and strengthen the immune system, but in fact its benefits go well beyond this. Did you know for instance that vitamin C is a precursor that the body uses to create the 'feel good hormone' serotonin (which is subsequently converted into the 'sleep hormone' melatonin)? This way, vitamin C helps to boost our mood while also improving sleep and combating insomnia.

And yes, vitamin C is also an antioxidant, and a great ingredient for strengthening the immune system.