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### Pretty in Pink

Whether you prefer pink clothes or not, get some reds and pinks, purples too, onto your plate and into your diet. From red tomatoes to pink passion fruit, strawberries to cherries, all those red and pink pigments are healthy stuff.

There are a lot of different specific chemicals that give our food red colors. Many are named for the foods (beets) or flowers (petunias, peonies) they were first taken from. But all of these red chemicals have healthy effects on our bodies.

Many are antioxidants. That means they protect us from cancers and inflammation. Some kill cancer cells directly, some just slow down how fast they grow. Some actually kill the bacteria that might be causing inflammation. You've heard how cranberry juice helps prevent urinary tract infections? Yes, that's the red pigment!

In test tubes many of these red pigments keep nerve cells alive and working longer. This helps maintain a good memory, balance and feeling. They also seem to prevent nervous system diseases.

There's some evidence that the red pigments encourage our pancreas to make more insulin, so that diabetes doesn't develop. Of course, eating more fruits and vegetables of any color is a good way to lose or maintain weight, but red pigments seem to be especially effective for weight loss.

So, here's a starter list for a pretty in pink diet. It's not just for a heart-healthy February either, do it all year long! Start with tomatoes in any form, pizza to tomato juice. Add some red peppers, hot or sweet. Purple eggplant and red beets, red cabbage and onions too. There are plenty of red fruits, from tiny raspberries to huge

watermelons. But don't forget plums and guavas, cherries and cranberries, everyday apples and exotic pomegranates. Both red grapes and pink grapefruit have the good stuff too. And then there are all those red and pink beans, from big kidney beans to little azukis. Not only do they have the red pigments, they have lots of fiber and protein too. Eat up, eat healthy, eat reds!

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