

**PENNY SAVER NEWS HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

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**More Variety IS Better!**

As we all know, more is not always better, not when it comes to calories or drugs, cod liver oil or lots of other things. But more IS better when it comes to fruit and vegetable variety. That's the conclusion of a recent study from the Cancer Prevention Laboratory in Colorado.

You might have heard the new slogan "Put a Rainbow on Your Plate". That refers to eating a wide variety of colors of fruits and vegetables. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans report recommends we eat a variety of fruits and divides vegetables into 5 categories and advises us to get some of each. The five vegetable categories are dark leafy, orange, beans and lentils, starchy veggies, and others. The new MyPyramid food guide recommends a variety of fruits and vegetables of different colors.

The evidence is overwhelming that people who eat a wider variety, especially of fruits and vegetables, are healthier. They tend to have less heart disease, less cancer, lower blood pressure, less diabetes, and are less likely to be overweight.

But would just green broccoli, white cauliflower, yellow squash, red tomatoes and purple grapes be effective? Those are the main colors. Or is it better to eat several kinds of green things? That's what this latest work was trying to study.

They picked 5 families of plants that they knew had lots of antioxidants. The families of spinach, broccoli, garlicks, oranges and tomatoes were chosen. There are plenty of colorful fruits and vegetables in these 5 families. For example, the spinach group also includes Swiss chard and beet greens. The broccoli group also includes cauliflower and radishes, and the tomato group includes peppers and eggplant.

Then they picked 13 more families of plants, groups that included kiwis, lettuce,

sweet potatoes, zucchini, cranberries, corn, beans, bananas, apples, celery, grapes, mushrooms and pineapples. About 50 women were told to only eat fruits and vegetables from the first group of 5 families, and another 50 were told to eat some from all 18 families of fruits and vegetables. They all ate between 8 and 10 servings of produce every day, and both ate about the same number of calories.

At the end of 2 weeks the researchers measured how much antioxidant activity each group had in their blood. They specifically looked at how much protection there was for the fats in their blood. Damaged fats are involved in heart disease, in cholesterol blocking arteries, and in starting or speeding up cancer growth. So more antioxidants to protect the fat from damage is probably very good for us.

After eating at least 8 servings of produce a day for two weeks, it was not surprising that both groups had at least a little more antioxidant protection than they did at the beginning of the study. But what was surprising was that only the women eating from all 18 families of plants had a big increase in protection. Eight servings a day, from just a few kinds of fruits and vegetables, was not enough to make a significant difference in how much protection they had. But 8 servings a day from 18 different kinds made a big difference.

No one had to stuff themselves with tons of blueberries, or pounds of broccoli. All they did was eat 8 or 10 different fruits and vegetables a day. A serving of each is only half a cup, so it's only 4 or 5 cups a day. That's a lot better than 4 or 5 pills a day for cholesterol and blood pressure, and a whole lot better than chemotherapy!

If plain steamed veggies just don't turn you on, change them. Take broccoli as an example. You can steam it in chicken broth, saute it in orange juice or drizzle your favorite low-cal salad dressing over it. Some of the raspberry-walnut vinaigrette dressings are very nice. Or you can puree it and hide it in spaghetti sauce. Please don't slather it with butter or drown it in cream or something canned soup!

Here's a simple but unusual salad dressing for fruit or spinach salad. It would

also be great on steamed broccoli. Enjoy!

### Celery Seed Dressing

½ cup sugar or low-calorie alternative

1 tsp dry mustard

1 tsp salt

1 Tbsp celery seed

1/4 onion, grated

1/3 C vinegar

¾ C olive or canola oil

Mix sugar, salt and mustard in small mixing bowl. Add grated onion and a few tablespoons of vinegar. Mix well. Add the oil a little at a time while beating with a whisk or fork. Stir in the rest of the vinegar and the celery seed. Store in small jar in refrigerator. Drizzle over fruit or vegetable salads. Will keep for 2 - 3 weeks. If it separates in the jar, just shake it up again.

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