

Put a Rainbow on Your Plate for more Protection

It's true that more variety equals more protection. Partially that's because each different fruit, vegetable and whole grain seems to have its own special set of phytonutrients (nutrients from plants). Thousands of those plant-based chemicals have been identified that offer us some level of help or protection. Some are antioxidants to break down cancer-causing toxins. Some stop or slow inflammation that damages our arteries. Others seem to beef up our immunity, speed up the repair process or kill cells that are turning cancerous.

While it is easier to study each phytonutrient by itself one at a time, we're finding out that many of them don't work alone. Each plant makes hundreds and produces its own special combination. Some combinations are more potent than others. Almost all combinations are more potent than any one phytonutrient by itself.

And now the doctors say that combinations of plants are more potent than individuals. Tomatoes by themselves are very good for protecting us. We know they have lots of lycopene. It's what makes tomatoes red. But capsules of pure powdered lycopene did not protect lab animals from cancer as well as whole dried tomatoes did.

Broccoli is also very good and provides lots of protection against cancer. Powdered broccoli pills did not work as well as fresh broccoli. And broccoli and tomatoes combined gave even more protection than just the two of them added together. It's as though $1 + 1 = 4$ instead of 2 in the protection game.

You don't need broccoli and tomatoes every day, but do aim for at least 5, even 9 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Get as many different colors and kinds as you can

in a week. Put a rainbow on your plate, for lots of healthy sunny days ahead.