

## Crunch Up Your Veggies

Yes, please, crunch on lots of vegetables throughout the holiday season. The more bright colors you put on your plate the happier your body will be. Of course your plate, and table, will be more attractive with a variety of colors. But your body will be healthier and happier too. A lot of those colorful pigments are the antioxidants and phytonutrients we're discovering are so very helpful.

They help protect us from the things that can cause cancers, that cause inflammation, that irritate cells. People whose diets are high in vegetables, both quantity and variety, are usually healthier. Their blood pressure will be lower, they'll have less diabetes and fewer problems with managing blood sugar, less Alzheimer's, the list goes on and on.

But how do you keep vegetables interesting? Use a variety of sauces and seasonings. A splash of low-fat salad dressing adds instant spark to the flavor, and can add sparkle to the table too. Seasoning steamed cauliflower with low-fat raspberry walnut vinaigrette dressing not only adds a new taste but now you'll have a lovely pink veggie for your meal. Use whatever combinations appeal to you.

Another way is to add nuts. These add crunch, flavor and nutrients of their own. Toast unsalted nuts on a cookie sheet in a 300 degree oven for about 5 minutes or in a hot, dry skillet. They should just be getting fragrant and slightly golden, not dark brown. A sprinkle of toasted slivered almonds or chopped walnuts on the green beans makes them a new dish for the meal. And their healthy minerals and unsaturated fats are a boost for your body. Have a great Holiday Season!