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### Put a Rainbow on Your Plate

That rainbow on your plate could be more than just pretty, it could mean better health for you and your family. Fruits and vegetables all contain a variety of different nutrients besides calories and fiber. Some phytonutrients (nutrients from plants) are antioxidants that help protect us from cancer, inflammation, heart and artery disease, maybe even diabetes. Some phytonutrients protect our DNA. Some lower blood pressure. Some help lower cholesterol. There are hundreds we do know and probably hundreds more that we don't yet recognize for their benefits.

But many of them come with colors. Some are actually colored themselves, others travel with colored pigments. So putting a rainbow of different colors on your plate every day and every week can increase the amount and the variety of plant protections you give yourself.

Reds, from strawberries to raspberries, tomatoes to beets, are easy to find. Yellows are also easy to get. Think of peaches and pumpkins, sweet potatoes and carrots. Green includes a lot more than lettuce. Green beans and broccoli, cabbage and kiwis all provide various protective ingredients. Many of us tend to overdose on the white potatoes. We forget about parsnips, rutabagas and mushrooms, boniato, name and cassava. But the color that seems the least visible is blue or purple.

That's a pity, because the blue and purple fruits and vegetables are especially good. They help manage blood pressure. There seems to be some good evidence that they can help with managing or delaying diabetes problems too.

So, what are your blue and purple choices? Blueberries of course, but also

blackberries and currants. There are juicy blue grapes as well as purple Concord and muscadines, and dried grapes make raisins. Plums and dried plums, with lots of different flavors, and dried figs also help. For some purple or blue vegetables, start with eggplant, then go on to purple sweet peppers, purple cabbage and endive, and now there's even purple asparagus!

You don't have to eat all of them, you don't have to eat them every single day. But the more often you get some blues in with the reds, yellows and greens of your diet, the wider your nutrition protection net will be. Put a Rainbow on Your Plate!

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