

Folk wisdom has always singled out fruits and vegetables as being indispensable for health, but it has only been within the last thirty years that we know why.

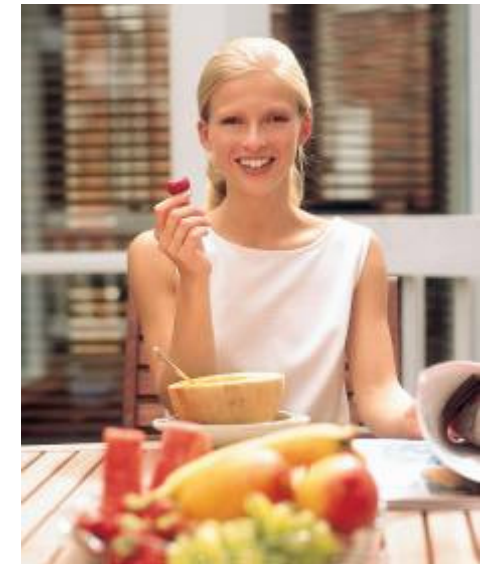
Science and technology have isolated compounds in plants and vegetables that have literally been our life-savers. These are phytonutrients which all fruits and vegetables produce because their means of survival in the environment is through the release of disease-fighting phytochemicals. Phytochemicals stimulate the production of protective self-repairing cells in plants.

They also produce the same kinds of responses in humans. For example, they release protective enzymes that inhibit cancer-producing substances, thus reducing our susceptibility to disease. It makes sense for us to harness the powers of plants in our diets. Four sources of phytonutrients that cannot be ignored if we want to remain healthy and cancer-free are berries, cruciferous and dark, leafy vegetables, soy and red wine.

Berries, such as blueberries, cranberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries offer the highest sources of phytonutrients. They all produce a natural substance called ellagic acid which has been shown to be a good defense against carcinogens because they suppress tumor development. Blueberries have the highest antioxidant content. High in

flavonoids, they also provide powerful protection against prostate cancer. Two and a half cups of fresh strawberries a day can supply enough vitamin C to help restore sperm production in men. Cranberries have been known to prevent cystitis, a painful and often recurring urinary tract infection in women. A study involving 72 postmenopausal women found that 10 ounces of cranberry juice every day reduced the likelihood of bladder infection by 58%. Cranberries have also been shown to reduce stomach ulcers and lower LDL cholesterol levels.

Cruciferous vegetables (like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower) and dark leafy vegetables (like swiss chard, spinach) also have high levels of antioxidant phytonutrients. In a study conducted by New York's Strang-Cornell Cancer Research Laboratory, women who consumed a diet high in cruciferous vegetables experienced a dramatic drop in estrogen levels, which means that these vegetable are definitely powerful tools for fighting against breast cancer. The assumption is that the phytochemicals in these vegetables deactivate potent estrogens, thus preventing



estrogen-sensitive cells, particularly in the breast, from developing tumors. Sulforaphane, another phytochemical in cruciferous vegetables, triggers a self-defense system in the body that acts to detoxify carcinogens. Spinach contains four times more beta carotene than broccoli and is a good source of vitamins C and E. It also has high levels of photosynthetic proteins which convert sunlight into energy. Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are harnessing the power of spinach in a new direction--creating highly cost-effective solar panels.

Soy is another phytonutrient rich food. Soy products contain genestein, which has been shown to have strong anti-cancer properties. It contains as well phytoestrogen, which has been shown to reduce the risk and spread of prostate cancer. Researchers suggest that the phytonutrient isoflavones, like phytoestrogen, may reduce the risk of breast cancer.

Another isoflavone compound in soy called daidzein has also been found to improve cholesterol and triglyceride levels in women. A study conducted at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles has uncovered evidence that this estrogen-like compound is the main reason for soy's healthy effects. Women with low estrogen levels seemed to have benefited most from daidzein, which reduced LDL cholesterol and total cholesterol levels, leading researchers to recommend that women include soy food products as part of their cardiovascular risk reduction strategies.

And last but not least is the phytonutrient resveratrol, found in red wine, that literally makes wine drinking a cancer-fighting measure. Resveratrol is present in the leaves, twigs and bark of the grape vines. And red wine, which is fermented from grape skins, seeds and twigs tends to have large quantities of these cancer-fighting substances. Resveratrol has also been demonstrated to be a potent antioxidant (more potent than vitamin C alone) which can act synergistically with vitamin C, thus enhancing the effects of each. It also prevents the formation of blood clots and promotes the formation of new dendrites in the brain.



So, let us put all these phytonutrients to good use. Why not sit down to a hearty soy burger, broccoli spears and cauliflower salad, warm berry compote and a glass of red wine? Yummy! Life cannot be better!

Each Bioforte capsule from Biotivia contains the equivalent of 250 glasses of red wine ... the full equivalent dose from recent clinical trials.

© **Mary Desaulniers**. A runner for 27 years, retired schoolteacher and writer, Mary is helping people reclaim their bodies. Nutrition, exercise, positive vision and purposeful engagement are the tools used to turn their bodies into creative selves. You can visit her at <http://www.GreatBodyat50.com>.