

Healthy Antioxidants in Foods

Scientists have discovered thousands of healthy compounds in foods called antioxidants and phytochemicals. Ingesting these substances through a diet that includes a colorful variety of fruits, vegetables, beans and grains can help our bodies fight disease. Some of these substances are listed in the following chart. Often, the fruit or vegetable color is an indicator of the compound present.

Plant Substance	Beneficial Effect on Health	Some Food Sources
Allium (white)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may help lower LDL cholesterol • helps maintain healthy immune system • helps control hypertension • may reduce risk of certain cancers • may slow or stop tumor growth 	Onion, garlic, leek, chives, scallion
Anthocyanins (blue, purple, red)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • antioxidant • may help reduce cancer risk • may help prevent urinary tract infections • may lessen pain & inflammation with gout • may protect against age-related mental decline 	Blueberry, blackberry, cranberry, cherry, strawberry, kiwi, plum, red and green grape, red cabbage, eggplant
Carotenoids (green, yellow, orange)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may help slow aging process • antioxidant effect • may reduce cancer cell growth • may improve lung function • enhances immune function • may improve eye health 	Red, some dark green, yellow & orange fruits & vegetables such as apricot, cantaloupe, papaya, carrot, pumpkin, sweet potato, winter squash, yam, citrus fruits, nectarine, peach, watermelon, broccoli, Brussel sprout, cauliflower, kohlrabi, turnip, rutabaga
Capsaicin (green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduces cancer risk 	Chilies, peppers
Catechins/Tannins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • antioxidant • may help reduce risk for cancers of stomach, skin, and esophagus • may improve urinary tract health • may reduce heart disease risk 	Black or green tea, wine, berries, cranberry, cocoa, chocolate
Isoflavones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inactivates hormonal mechanism which fuels breast cancer • stimulates protective enzymes • blocks substances that cause cancer • suppresses tumor growth 	Legumes (dried beans & peas), peanut, soybean and soy-containing foods

Inositol/Phytic acid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may reduce cancer risk and slow tumor progression • may help control blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglycerides 	Whole corn, oat, rice, rye, wheat, nuts, seeds, legumes, soybean
Isothiocyanates/ Indoles (green, white)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • antioxidant • block tumor growth • decrease inflammation 	Cruciferous vegetables such as arugula, bok choy, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collard green, kohlrabi, turnip, mustard green, horseradish, kale, radish, rutabaga, watercress
Liminoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • antioxidant that may help lower heart disease • lowers LDL, total cholesterol and triglycerides • may prevent cancer • being researched in cancer treatment 	Citrus fruits, especially rinds and edible white membrane
Lycopene (red)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduces risk of prostate cancer • may reduce risk of heart disease • protects against cancer of the digestive tract • 	Tomato, tomato products, pink grapefruit, guava, watermelon
Polyphenols (red, green, white)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may reduce cancer risk • may lower cholesterol • may reduce heart disease risk • may reduce eye disease and other degenerative diseases • antioxidant action 	Apple, cherry, berries, red grape, kiwi, pear, pomegranate, chestnut, peanut, lentils, pecan, walnut, tumeric
Saponins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may lower cholesterol • contains anti-cancer enzymes 	Soybeans and soy-containing foods, legumes, green leafy vegetables
Sterols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • destroys cancer cells • decreases inflammation 	Asparagus, beet, Brussel sprout, legumes, nuts, flax, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower seed, canola, olive, safflower and sesame oil, whole grains
Terpenes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • antioxidant • slows cancer growth • boosts immune function • decreases inflammation 	Apple, cherry, citrus fruits, pear, prune, bay leaf, dill, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, thyme, pumpkin seed
Zeaxanthin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributes to healthy vision • may help prevent macular degeneration 	Corn, spinach, winter squash, green vegetables, citrus fruits

Source: American Institute Cancer Research at: www.aicr.org
International Food Information Council Foundation at: www.ific.org

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