

EAT YOUR VEGGIES

Feast first with your eyes! A plate of food full of colour and vitality appeals to our taste buds and makes our mouths water. This is the start of our digestive process as the saliva you produce is the first step in breaking down your food so that you can access the nutrients within it. Packed full of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients, high in fibre and low in sugars eating your veggies can support your heart health, your immunity and your digestive function. They can help your skin 'glow', influence your mood and give you nutrients that are needed for energy production.

You can see these days how colour contributes to the art that is modern food presentation by top chefs. The natural components that give fruit and vegetables their colour are called **phytonutrients**. It is thought it is these phytonutrients that help plants to protect themselves against disease, and some are **antioxidants** which may prevent or delay cell damage.

Vitamins are essential for us to stay healthy and vegetables are full of them. Deficiency of certain vitamins can lead to specific disease and as they can't be manufactured by your body we need to get them through our food. Some vitamins are fat soluble and some are water soluble. Making sure we eat enough healthy fat, helps us to absorb the fat-soluble vitamins, A, D, E & K.

Minerals are chemical elements that are involved in various processes in your body. They help to regulate how our cells function and to serve as building blocks for our cells and organs. Some minerals are needed in larger amounts, like calcium, magnesium and potassium, whilst some are only needed in smaller amounts, like selenium, zinc and iodine. Vegetables contain a wide range of minerals and unlike vitamins, minerals don't deteriorate during storage or cooking.

We could talk about the benefits of vegetables all day, but let's take a moment to think about specific vegetables that might support our liver— that powerhouse of detox organs.

Sulphur increases the activity of an important liver detoxification enzyme: glutathione. The **brassica family**: cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, turnip, kale, radish and **alliums**: garlic, onion, shallots, leek, chives are all sulphur containing vegetables. Sulphur containing glutathione is an important antioxidant and is needed by the liver as part of its phase 2 detoxification process.

Belonging to the same vegetable family as chard and spinach, **beetroot** fibre can increase the level of antioxidant enzymes in the body, (specifically glutathione), as well as support the production of white blood cells (responsible for detecting and eliminating abnormal cells). Beets are also one of the richest sources of glutamine, an amino acid, required for liver detoxification. Beetroot greens are a rich source of calcium, iron, and vitamins A & C, so make sure you eat your greens too.

Leafy green vegetables such as spinach, kale, collard greens, chicory, lettuce can be eaten raw, cooked or juiced. These plants are high in chlorophyll, a green pigment containing fibres which may bind to chemicals, pesticides and heavy metals, reducing absorption of them in the body. Bitter leafy greens, like dandelion greens, mustard greens, chicory and bitter gourd, can help the creation and flow of bile (which removes waste from your blood and organs).

Known for their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, **avocados** are abundant in vitamins including folate, potassium, copper, vitamins E, B6 & C. They are also a rich source of carotenoids, particularly good for eye and skin health, and monounsaturated fatty acids which support a healthy heart. In the context of detox they help the body produce glutathione.

Apples are high in fibre, antioxidants, quercetin and vitamin C. They also contain pectin, a form of soluble fibre. Pectin draws water, and along with it toxins, from your digestive tract to be excreted. This cleansing activity makes it easier for the liver to do its own job of detoxification.

High in fibre, potassium, vitamin C and antioxidants, **grapefruit** can also boost your liver detoxification enzymes. It amplifies liver detox mechanisms through its glutathione and pectin content. In fact, it does this so well that it may interfere with the absorption of drugs, so make sure you check out any interactions before significantly increasing the amount of grapefruit juice you drink.

Seaweed: sea vegetables contain sodium alginate (algin), which absorbs toxins from the digestive tract. Kelp is a type of seaweed that is particularly rich in algin and green seaweed is rich in chlorophyll, those special fibres that bind to and remove toxins from the body.

Lemons can stimulate the release of liver enzymes and help convert toxins into a water-soluble form that can be easily excreted from the body. They are rich sources of vitamin C, which can help to thin and decongest bile, supporting the liver to more effectively break down fats. That is why our detox plan starts the day with drinking lemon water.

Remember to eat your rainbow of veggies every day: the best diet is full of flavour and vitality.