

Five ways fruits and vegetables can save your life

From lowering your cholesterol to reducing your risk of diabetes, find out all the ways adding more produce to your diet improves your quality of life.

Jul 18, 2013 [Natasha Turner, ND 1](#)



Your parents were right, you should eat more fruits and veggies daily. What they may not have known, however, is just how far their benefits extend. With the ability to influence your arteries, mental health, blood sugar and of course, your healthy glow, there's a great argument for leaving some extra room on your plate for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Read on for even more impressive ways a daily dose of fruits and vegetables can boost your health and prevent premature death:

1. Drop cholesterol levels by 23 percent We've all heard that an apple a day keeps the doctor away, and in this case, it also steers you clear of coronary artery disease. In [a study](#) of healthy, middle-aged adults, consumption of one apple a day for four weeks lowered blood levels

of oxidized LDL — low-density lipoprotein, the “bad” cholesterol.

Similar research from Florida State University found that daily apple consumption dropped LDL levels by 23 percent over six months along with C-reactive protein levels in women. Not to mention, the women lost an average of 3.3 pounds despite the extra calories.

Bottom line: Choose organic apples whenever possible and add them to salads, smoothies or even warmed and topped with cinnamon, stevia and chopped almonds.

2. Eat four to seven servings for a better mood **Researchers from the University of Warwick** looked at the eating habits of 80,000 people in Britain and discovered that mental well-being rises with the number of fruits and veggies consumed, peaking at seven portions a day.

A **similar study** from the University of Otago came to the same conclusion – on days when the participants ate more fruits and veggies, they reported feeling happier, calmer and more energetic.

Bottom line: There’s one caveat I should add. Eating fruit alone will spike blood sugar levels, so opt to include veggies at each major meal and low glycemic fruit (such as berries, apples, oranges or pears) 1-2 times a day, particularly in your protein smoothies. Not only will you be happier, you’ll also be slimmer.

3. Reduce your risk of stroke by 55 percent **Regardless of how you pronounce them, tomatoes can reduce your risk of stroke according to recent research. Lycopene**, the antioxidant compound that gives tomatoes their colour, is the primary health-promoting ingredient.

A **12-year study** of more than 1,000 men between the ages of 46 and

65 found that people with the highest levels of lycopene in their blood were 55 percent less likely to have a stroke than those with the lowest amounts of lycopene.

In cooked tomatoes, the nutrient has also been shown to slow the growth of and even destroy prostate cancer cells. In **laboratory studies** lycopene intercepted the cancer's ability to make the connections it needs to attach to a healthy blood supply.

Bottom line: I recommend adding chopped tomatoes to a salad, baked as a side dish or even cooked in an omelette for breakfast.

4. Choose greens to tighten your belt by 14 percent Greens can **do wonders for your blood sugar**. Whether it's the high antioxidant content, the fibre that fills your tummy, or the fact that a meal with veggies is healthier in general, **research** from the University of Leicester reveals eating one and a half extra servings of green leafy vegetables a day reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes by 14 percent!

The benefits even start in the womb. Expecting mothers who eat vegetables daily appear to have children who are **less likely** to develop type 1 diabetes.

Bottom line: Remember, the more stable your blood sugar, the easier it will be to shed the pounds.

5. Improve your skin in six weeks According to research published in the online journal **PLoS ONE**, even one extra portion of fruit and veggies a day will give you a healthier and rosier glow in six weeks. Scottish researchers suggest that this is a result of two naturally occurring food pigments: beta-carotene, the pigment that

makes carrots orange, and lycopene, again that give tomatoes their vibrant hue.

The study found that two or more servings of fruits and veggies a day saw improved benefits in skin colour thanks to the antioxidants found within them. The positive physical response not only made participants more attractive to those surveyed, they also encouraged participants to ensure they were getting their daily requirements of fruits and veggies!

Along with the physical benefits researchers also associated the antioxidant compounds, “precipitate damage to cellular proteins, lipids and DNA and consequently may contribute to a variety of age-related degenerative processes, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and related complications, and possibly some cancers.”

How do you ensure you get your daily servings of fruits and vegetables? Tell us in the comment section below.

Natasha Turner, N.D. is a naturopathic doctor, *Chatelaine* magazine columnist, and author of the bestselling books *The Hormone Diet* and *The Supercharged Hormone Diet*. Her newest release, *The Carb Sensitivity Program*, is now available across Canada. She’s also the founder of the Toronto-based **Clear Medicine Wellness Boutique** and a regular guest on *The Dr. Oz Show*. For more wellness advice from Natasha Turner, [click here](#).