

Try these cancer-fighting vegetables

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We now know that cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, various greens, rutabagas and turnips are unique among foods as being a rich source of Sulforaphane: sulfur-containing compounds responsible for the strong odor released when they're cooked. Sulforaphane is one of the most studied compounds formed from glucosinolates.

Numerous promising studies have examined Sulforaphane's ability to interfere with the cancer process at different stages of development for lung, colorectal, breast and prostate cancers. Preliminary studies have uncovered evidence it may be effective against melanoma, esophageal cancer and pancreatic cancer.

A study conducted at the Linus Pauling institute of Oregon State University has found even more positive news that Sulforaphane targets not only cancerous cells, but also cells which are showing early signs of abnormalities while leaving healthy prostate cells alone. That means this compound is safe to be used in cancer prevention or treatment through both diet and drugs.

How much Sulforaphane you get from cruciferous vegetable depends how they are cooked and handled. Extended boiling and prolonged storage, even at optimal refrigeration, reduces the amount of Sulforaphane.

Eating raw cruciferous vegetables that have been stored for a short period of time is likely to provide the most Sulforaphane. The degree to which people benefit from increased intake of these vegetables may also be a matter of genetics (people inherit different capacities to metabolize and eliminate).

At this point, there's no way to know who may benefit the most from Sulforaphane.

The National Cancer Institute recommends consuming five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines recommend that one-half of your plate at a meal should consist of vegetables and fruits. The study is just one more piece of the puzzle, but findings are showing consistently protective effects.

Cruciferous vegetables should be at the top of the list of all vegetables. Not only do they have cancer fighting compounds but they are also a good source of other nutrients such as vitamin-C, carotenoids, fiber, calcium and folate.

For individual nutrition counseling, please see a registered dietitian. Many insurance companies now pay for the consultations.

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