

Phytonutrients That Boost Wellbeing

Phytonutrients are chemicals produced by plants to help them ward off harmful bacteria, fungi, and viruses. Researchers have studied these bioactive compounds extensively, and we now know they have many beneficial effects on human health as well.

These compounds are known to possess anti-inflammatory properties that offer protection against oxidative stressors related to environmental exposures, such as diets that are high in sugar, fat, and processed foods. As a result, phytonutrients are also protective against chronic diseases like cancer, heart disease, cataracts, and Alzheimer's disease.

A 2013 study noted that while more than 5,000 phytonutrients are currently known, it is believed that there are many more yet to be discovered. Because we still have a lot to learn about how these beneficial nutrients work in the body, many health experts suggest focusing on food sources of phytonutrients rather than supplement forms.⁶

Here are a few foods to help you increase the phytonutrients in your diet:

Green Tea. Include an occasional cup of green tea to increase the number of beneficial catechins and polyphenols. (Note: Compounds in green tea can interact with certain medications, so be sure to consult your doctor or pharmacist before changing your usual intake.)

Cocoa. Cocoa, like that found in dark chocolate, contains beneficial procyanidins, theobromine, and catechins.

Spinach. Add some fresh spinach greens to your salad for a boost of polyphenols and lutein.

Red Wine. Drinking red wine (in moderation) can provide beneficial resveratrol. You can also find this compound in red fruits and vegetables.

Phytonutrients, while still somewhat elusive from a scientific standpoint, have been shown to offer a wide range of health benefits for human health. The easiest way to increase the number of phytonutrients in your diet is to include a wide variety of brightly colored fruits and vegetables.⁷



Apples. Fresh fruits like apples, pears, and peaches contain quercetin, a flavonoid that is linked to reduced inflammation.

Blueberries. To increase the amount of lycopene and anthocyanidins in your diet, try adding blueberries to yogurt or oatmeal.

6. <https://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/phytonutrients>

7. <https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/whats-food/phytonutrients>