

6 cancer-fighting superfoods

By Leslie Barrie

To reduce your risk of cancer, look no further than your fridge. "All the studies on cancer and nutrition point to eating plant-based foods for their phytonutrients and other special compounds," says Richard Béliveau, PhD, chair in the prevention and treatment of cancer at the University of Québec at Montreal and author of *Foods to Fight Cancer*.

Aim for five to nine daily servings of all kinds of fruits and vegetables—especially these six superstars.

Broccoli

All cruciferous veggies (think cauliflower, cabbage, kale) contain cancer-fighting properties, but broccoli is the only one with a sizable amount of sulforaphane, a particularly potent compound that boosts the body's protective enzymes and flushes out cancer-causing chemicals, says Jed Fahey, ScD. A recent University of Michigan study on mice found that sulforaphane also targets cancer stem cells—those that aid in tumor growth.

Helps fight: breast, liver, lung, prostate, skin, stomach, and bladder cancers

Your Rx: The more broccoli, the better, research suggests—

so add it wherever you can, from salads to omelets to the top of your pizza.

[Health.com: 13 easy pizza recipes](#)

Berries

All berries are packed with cancer-fighting phytonutrients. But black raspberries, in particular, contain very high concentrations of phytochemicals called anthocyanins, which slow down the growth of premalignant cells and keep new blood vessels from forming (and potentially feeding a cancerous tumor), according to Gary D. Stoner, PhD, a professor of internal medicine at The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

Helps fight: colon, esophageal, oral, and skin cancers

Your Rx: Stoner uses a concentrated berry powder in his studies but says a half-cup serving of berries a day may help your health, too.

[Health.com: Go wild for berries!](#)

Tomatoes

This juicy fruit is the best dietary source of lycopene, a carotenoid that gives tomatoes their red hue, Béliveau says. And that's good news, because lycopene was found to stop endometrial cancer cell growth in a study in *Nutrition and Cancer*. Endometrial cancer causes nearly 8,000 deaths a year.

Helps fight: endometrial, lung, prostate, and stomach cancers

Your Rx: The biggest benefits come from cooked tomatoes (think pasta sauce!), since the heating process increases the amount of lycopene your body is able to absorb.

[Health.com: 10 tasty tomato recipes](#)

Walnuts

Their phytosterols (cholesterol-like molecules found in plants) have been shown to block estrogen receptors in breast cancer cells, possibly slowing the cells' growth, says Elaine Hardman, PhD, associate professor at Marshall University School of Medicine in Huntington, West Virginia.

Helps fight: breast and prostate cancers

Your Rx: Munching on an ounce of walnuts a day may yield the best benefits, Hardman's research found.

[Health.com: 8 super nuts](#)

Garlic

Phytochemicals in garlic have been found to halt the formation of nitrosamines, carcinogens formed in the stomach (and in the intestines, in certain conditions) when you consume nitrates, a common food preservative, Béliveau says. In fact, the Iowa Women's Health Study found that women with the

highest amounts of garlic in their diets had a 50 percent lower risk of certain colon cancers than women who ate the least.

Helps fight: breast, colon, esophageal, and stomach cancers

Your Rx: Chop a clove of fresh, crushed garlic (crushing helps release beneficial enzymes), and sprinkle it into that lycopene-rich tomato sauce while it simmers.

[Health.com: Surprising health benefits of garlic](#)

Beans

A study out of Michigan State University found that black and navy beans significantly reduced colon cancer incidence in rats, in part because a diet rich in the legumes increased levels of the fatty acid butyrate, which in high concentrations has protective effects against cancer growth. Another study, in the journal *Crop Science*, found dried beans particularly effective in preventing breast cancer in rats.

Helps fight: breast and colon cancers

Your Rx: Add a serving—a half-cup—of legumes a few times a week (either from a can or dry beans that've been soaked and cooked) to your usual rotation of greens or other veggies.