Fruits and Veggies Protect Your Health!

Improve your health and reduce your risk of chronic disease with fresh fruits and vegetables!

According to MyPlate, the USDA's guide to healthful and balanced eating, "Eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruits as part of an overall healthy diet **may reduce risk for heart disease, including heart attack and stroke**. Eating a diet rich in some vegetables and fruits as part of an overall healthy diet **may protect against certain types of cancers**. Diets rich in foods containing fiber, such as some vegetables and fruits, **may reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes**."

So stock up on healthful fruits and vegetables -- they're super good for you!

Here are some examples of fruits and vegetables that are nutrient powerhouses...

The pigments in **blueberries**, called anthocyanins, have been shown to slow and even reverse age-related declines in brain function, as well as cognitive and motor performance. Other compounds in blueberries may delay the effects of vascular dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Oranges are an excellent source of vitamin C, an antioxidant that protects your cells from free radical damage. Vitamin C boosts your immune system, reduces inflammation, and protects blood vessels.

Yams and **sweet potatoes** top the charts in terms of beta carotene content. Beta carotene is also known as vitamin A and it plays a key role in heart health and heart disease prevention. **Butternut squash**
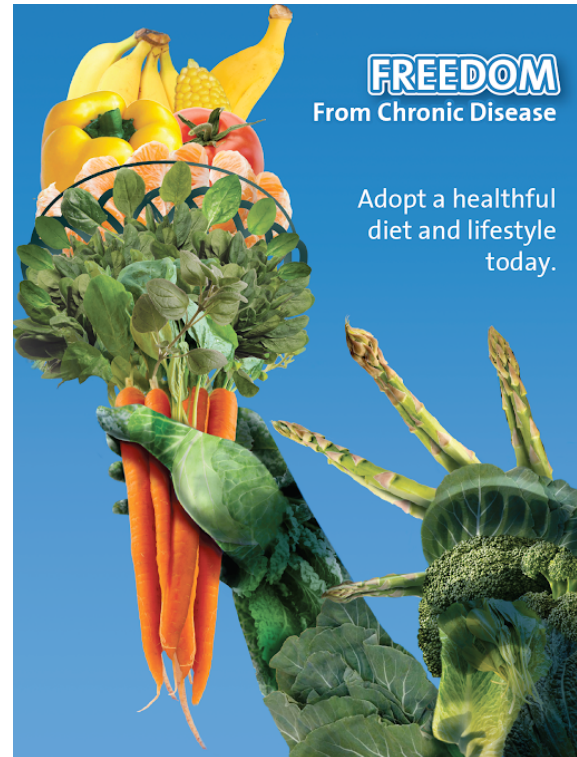
and **pumpkins** are rich in beta carotene too.

Bananas have tons of potassium, which is key to controlling blood pressure and helping your heart work normally. They also contain compounds that protect your stomach from ulcer damage.

Dark leafy greens like **spinach** and **kale** rock the vitamin count, with excellent supplies of vitamins A, C, and K. These vitamins protect your bones, decrease inflammation, support cell growth and development, protect vision, support your circulatory system, and improve immune function. The Agricultural Research Service asserts that "Because of their high content of antioxidants, green leafy vegetables may be one of the best cancer-preventing foods. Studies have shown that eating 2 to 3 servings of green leafy vegetables per week may lower the risk of stomach, breast and skin cancer."