

GOOD HEALTH  NUTRITION

THE FOOD RAINBOW

IT'S the bright, vibrant colours of fruit and vegetables that attract us — which is just as well, because brightly coloured foods tend to be richer in key substances that protect against disease. According to nutritionists, eating across the food rainbow is vital for a healthy life — everyone should eat something from each colour range every day. Our guide, by ANASTASIA STEPHENS, will help you find the foods to choose to boost your health

RED

Tomatoes: Lycopene, the red colour in tomatoes, is a powerful antioxidant with cancer-fighting properties. In a U.S. trial, three servings a day greatly reduced the likelihood of prostate cancer. In older people, lycopene could reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. Grilling tomatoes lightly will have a more beneficial effect than eating them raw.

Strawberries: Strawberries are rich in coumarins — which prevent the formation of cancer-causing nitrosamines in the body — vitamin C and phenols, which have strong antioxidant properties.

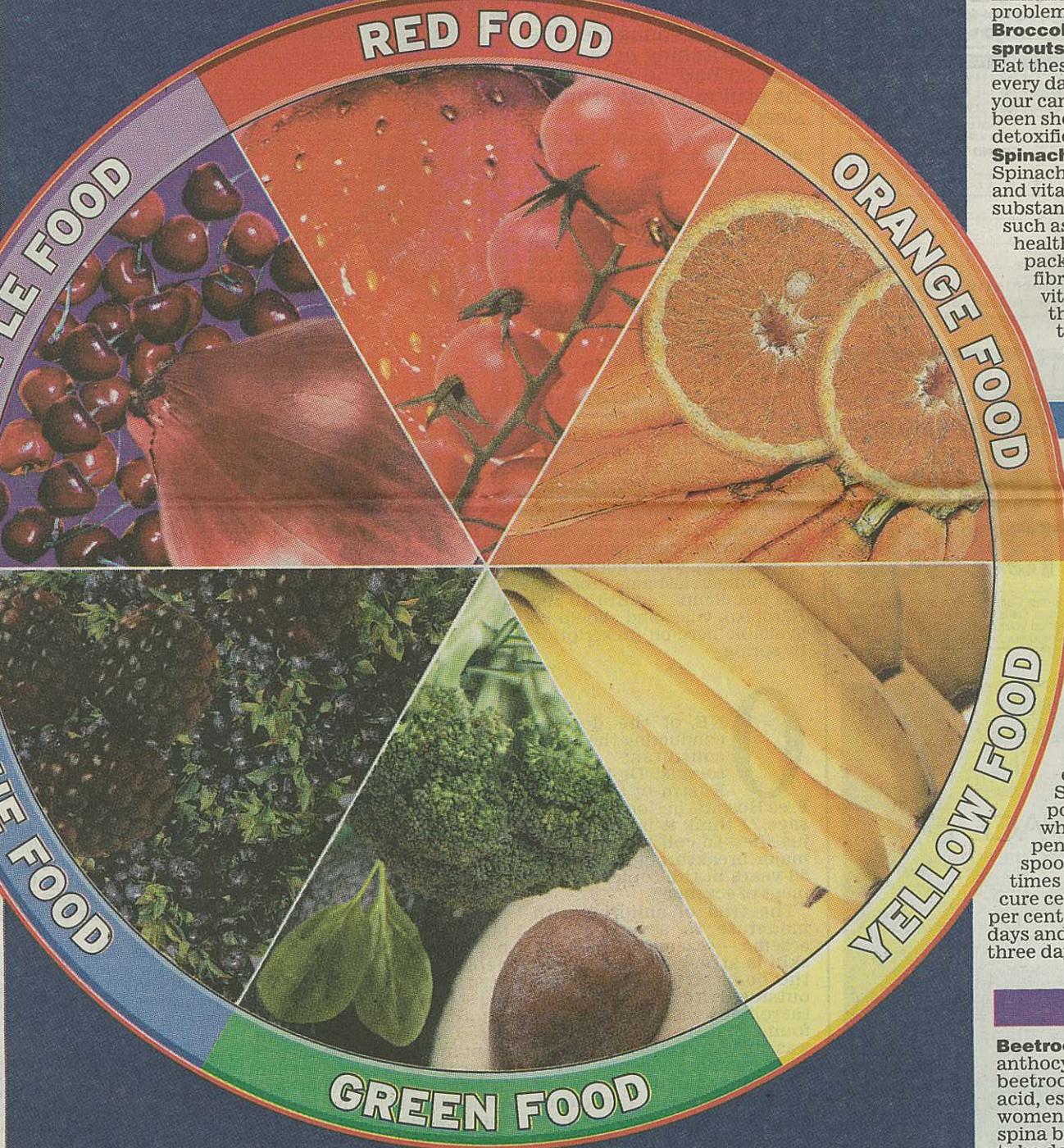
Watermelon: The flesh contains key antioxidants, while the seeds are rich in vitamin E, essential fats, selenium and zinc. Patrick Holford, nutritionist and author of the Optimum Nutrition Bible says: 'If you put both flesh and seeds into a blender to make juice, you have a natural cocktail ideal for fighting infections and general detoxification.'

Cranberries: Research published in the British Medical Journal showed that women drinking cranberry juice halved their risk of succumbing to cystitis — caused by bacterial organisms. Cranberries contain substances known as pro-anthocyanidins which cause the bacteria to be flushed harmlessly out of the system. While much of the research has centred on women, they offer potential benefits for men, too. Cranberries are rich in a compound called quercetin which has anti-inflammatory properties.

ORANGE

Carrots: A rich source of alpha-carotene and vitamin C to help protect against cancer. The World Cancer Research Fund found that alpha-carotene may inhibit abnormal cell proliferation associated with the disease. Carrots may also protect against Alzheimer's.

Oranges, Sweet Potatoes, Pumpkin, Squash, Apricots, Mangoes: All are rich in beta-carotene, which can be converted into vitamin A, as well as vitamin C. Sweet potatoes are also a rich source of vitamin E. Aside from protecting against aging, a range of cancers and heart disease, any food containing beta-carotene helps keep the retina healthy and guards against cataracts and age-related macular



degeneration (AMD), the most common cause of blindness in the elderly.

YELLOW

Corn, Yellow Peppers, Turmeric and Mustard: These all contain curcumin, a potent anti-inflammatory and painkiller. Concentrated curcumin has been found to reduce pain in arthritis patients as effectively as pharmaceutical drugs. Eating the foods or condiments three times a day

can have a mild anti-inflammatory effect.

Lemons and Grapefruit: Citrus fruit contain high levels of vitamin C, one of the most powerful immune-boosting antioxidants. As vitamin C is destroyed by exposure to air, foods such as grapefruit or freshly squeezed lemon are some of the best sources. Vitamin C can break down toxins, is a natural anti-histamine and can reduce levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. Studies by the World Cancer Research Fund also show

Vitamin C can decrease the risk of many cancers, particularly of the stomach.

Bananas: These are the main source of dietary potassium used in nerve impulses — and a good source of energy.

GREEN

Wheatgrass and Barleygrass: Packed full of nutrients, these are among the richest natural source of antioxidants and chlorophyll, the substance that makes plants green. As

chlorophyll isn't readily digestible by the body, these grasses have to be pulped to juice, which is cleansing and full of minerals, especially magnesium. Chlorophyll also kills germs and is a powerful wound-healer.

There are hundreds of enzymes in cereal grasses such as wheatgrass, which help proper cell function and digestion.

Blue-green algae

These organisms contain some of the purest, most valuable nutrients. Spirulina, from Mexico and Africa, is 60 per cent protein and an excellent source of essential fats which feed the brain. It is rich in betacarotene and has been shown to have numerous benefits, particularly for arthritis, boosting the immune system and easing skin problems.

Broccoli and Brussels

sprouts: Rich in glucosinolates. Eat these, or cabbage or kale, every day, and you can halve your cancer risk. They have also been shown to increase liver detoxification.

Spinach and Avocados:

Spinach is a rich source of iron, and vitamins and contains substances called xanthophylls, such as lutein, important for healthy eyes. Avocados are packed with vitamin C, fibre, potassium and vitamin E. They are also thought to help protect the brain from damaging chemicals known as free radicals.

BLUE

Blueberries and Blackberries:

Fruits with a purple/blue colour, such as black grapes, bilberries, blackcurrants and blueberries, are rich in flavonoids — very powerful antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents. Eat berries when available or supplement them with concentrated extracts.

Elderberries: Sold in extract form as Sambucol, they contain powerful antiviral agents which prevent viruses from penetrating cells. A dessert spoon of Sambucol three times a day has been shown to cure certain strains of flu in 73 per cent of patients within two days and 90 per cent within three days.

PURPLE

Beetroot: Given its colour by anthocyanidins and flavonoids, beetroot is a rich source of folic acid, essential for pregnant women to reduce the risk of spina bifida and other neural-tube defects.

Cherries: Rich in anthocyanidins, a type of bioflavonoid, which fight cancer and help combat types of arthritis and gout.

Red Cabbage: Rich in beta-carotene, to fight a range of age-related diseases and cancers. Some studies have found that if you eat cabbage more than once a week you are only one third as likely to develop colon cancer.

Red Onions: The main active ingredients of red and white onions are sulphur compounds, including allicin and allixin, which boost the immune system and protect against cancer. Also contain quercetin, which protects the heart, lowers cholesterol and has anti-inflammatory properties.



Find out how choosing your food by colour can help you lose weight at www.femail.co.uk/health