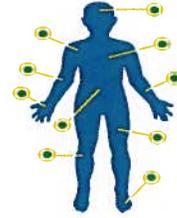


# STAYING WELL

## Healing Foods

### Why Should I Choose Fruits & Vegetables?

- Excellent source of fiber
- Rich in vitamins and minerals
- Low in calories and most are fat-free
- Provide a food source of water - being made up of more than 50% water
- Abundant in phytochemicals and antioxidants
- Helps reduce risk of various diseases such as cancer, obesity, heart disease, arthritis, asthma, macular degeneration and diverticulosis



### Specific Considerations:

#### **Phytochemicals**

- Phytochemicals ('phyto' means plant) are naturally occurring plant chemicals
- Phytochemicals are not yet classified as nutrients. Nutrients are substances necessary for sustaining life. Phytochemicals have been identified as containing properties that aid in disease prevention
- In the human body, some phytochemicals act as antioxidants, some protect and regenerate essential nutrients, while others work to deactivate cancer-causing substances
- Thousands of phytochemicals have been identified in the plant foods we eat
- One serving of fruit or vegetables may contain 100 different phytochemicals. Some are available when the vegetable is raw, and others when the vegetable is cooked. It is important to eat a mix of raw and cooked vegetables to gain the most benefit from phytochemicals.
  - Cooking method matters; steaming helps retain water soluble vitamins like B vitamins and vitamin C rather than boiling
  - High cooking temperature and long cooking times also destroy heat sensitive nutrients such as B vitamins, vitamin C, and folate, so keep cooking times short

#### **Antioxidants**

The most well known phytochemicals are the antioxidants. Antioxidants protect cells from damage caused by metabolic by-products (free radicals), as well as toxic substances from food and the environment. As our bodies use oxygen to produce energy, free radicals are formed that may damage cells and lead to cellular dysfunction and disease. Colorful plant foods are loaded with antioxidants so eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is a great way to protect the body from oxidation, and reduce the risk of numerous health conditions.

#### Examples of antioxidants:

- Beta carotene - carrots, cantaloupe
- Vitamin C - citrus, cantaloupe, mango, and kiwi
- Vitamin E - dark leafy greens, broccoli
- Selenium – mushrooms, cabbage



Eat a Rainbow of fruits and vegetables every day!