



**DIET DESK**  
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## THE 'RAINBOW' DIET

We are all looking for a bit of colour in our lives, and it's now standard nutrition advice that you must get some colour on your plate. Colourful food is much more than pleasant to the eye—it is an essential indicator of the kind of nutrition that the food is providing, and a mix of colours, therefore, becomes important if you want a nutritionally balanced meal.

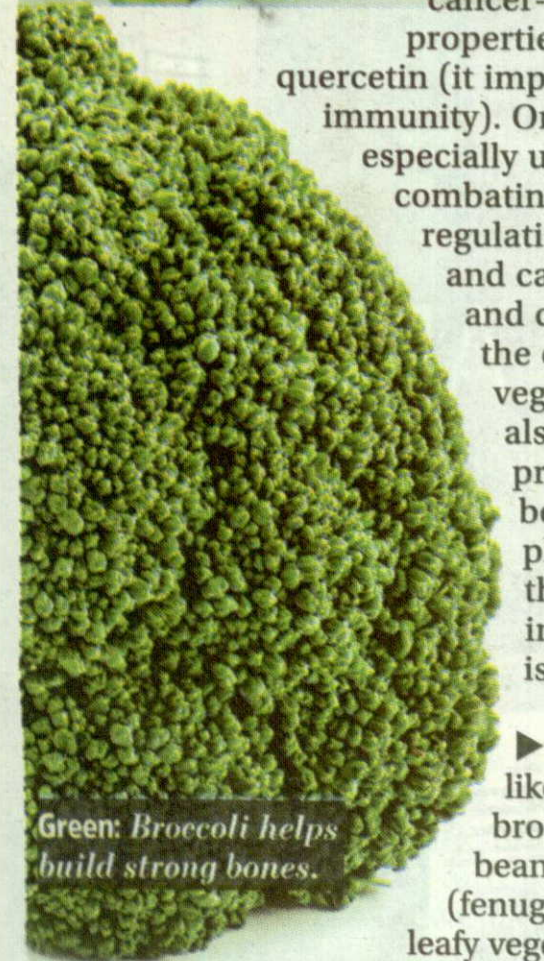
The different colours in food represent different pigments—chlorophyll, for instance, is responsible for the colour green. The orange, red, yellow and purple pigments, or phytonutrients, protect plants from excessive solar radiation that can damage cells and tissue and also help to protect against microbes and other harmful infections.

Eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables can significantly improve health by providing a rich array of vitamins and phytonutrients that the body needs for optimum health.

**The six primary health colours are white, green, yellow, red, orange and purple.**

► White foods, which include garlic, onions, cauliflower and radish, are primarily useful for boosting immunity and reducing inflammation, viral infections and fungal infections. These foods are

**White:** Cauliflower boosts immunity.



**Green:** Broccoli helps build strong bones.

excellent for those who have arthritic tendencies, or are prone to frequent colds and coughs. The nutrients they contain are anthoxanthins (these contain health-promoting chemicals which can lower blood cholesterol levels), sulphur (it has cancer-fighting properties) and quercetin (it improves immunity). Onions are especially useful for combating diabetes by regulating blood sugar and cauliflower and cabbage from the cruciferous vegetable group also help prevent cancers because of the phytonutrients they contain—indoles and isothiocyanates.

**Yellow:** Lemons contain vitamin C.



► Green foods like spinach, broccoli, green beans, celery, methi (fenugreek) and green leafy vegetables are rich in chlorophyll, which supports liver and kidney function. Green foods are also rich in vitamin K that helps regulate blood clotting and aids the building of strong bones. Spinach and curry leaves (*kadi patta*) are also good for strengthening hair because they are rich sources of B-vitamin, folic acid. Methi and curry leaves also help control blood sugar.

► Yellow foods, which include lemons, pineapples, yellow peppers and grapefruits, are rich sources of vitamin C and are excellent for preventing colds, coughs, allergies and inflammation. Pineapples also contain the compound

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bromelain, which has significant anti-inflammatory properties and is useful for those with arthritis. The citrus bioflavonoids that impart the yellow colour in these foods also help in firming up skin texture, and strengthen tendons and ligaments because they support collagen production.

► Red foods like tomatoes, watermelon, beetroot and red bell peppers are rich with the antioxidants

**Red:** Tomatoes contain lycopene.



lycopene and anthocyanin. These protect the skin and strengthen cell structure and therefore aid in circulation of blood while also regulating blood pressure. Tomatoes also protect the body from ultraviolet radiation. A point to note is that the antioxidant lycopene in tomatoes is best absorbed when they are cooked, especially in olive oil.

► Orange foods like carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin and oranges are high in the phytonutrient beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A. Vitamin A plays a vital role in building immunity and in strengthening membranous tissue. Vitamin A is also good for the eyes, hair and skin. Oranges are a rich source of vitamin C and help combat allergies, while sweet potatoes and pumpkins are rich in fibres.

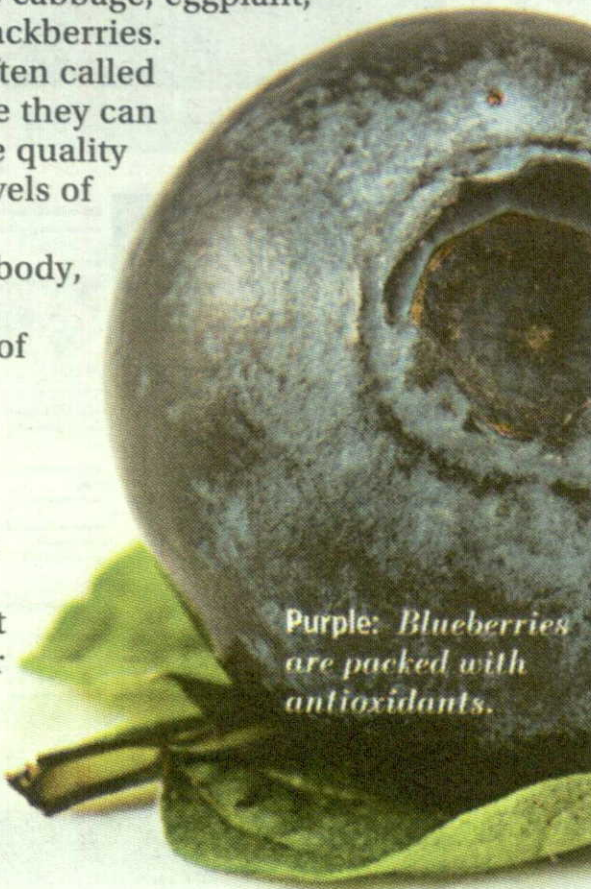
**Orange:** Oranges are high in beta-carotene.



► Purple fruits and vegetables have the richest storehouse of antioxidants among all foods—the list includes purple cabbage, eggplant, blueberries and blackberries. Purple foods are often called superfoods because they can greatly improve the quality of life by raising levels of HDL, or the good cholesterol, in the body, offering protection from a wide range of diseases, and improving brain function.

Try to include as many colours and textures in your diet on a daily basis. For example, start the day with a red-orange juice of tomato, beetroot and carrot. Go colourful for lunch with purple cabbage, yellow pepper and white spring onion salad with a lemon garlic dressing, and have a mixed platter of lightly sautéed dark green beans or spinach for dinner. Maintain a colour combination of your diet and try to include all six colours every day.

**Purple:** Blueberries are packed with antioxidants.



*Madhuri Ruia is a nutritionist and Pilates expert. She runs InteGym in Mumbai, which advocates workouts with healthy diets.*

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