

SUPPORTING DETOXIFICATION WITH FOOD

Every day, all day, our bodies work so hard to take out the trash, from the normal processes our bodies naturally do to keep us alive, or from the extra burdens of environmental or chemical exposures (air, food, water, household products, medications, internal waste products, etc.). This is no easy task! We can help our bodies out by supporting daily detox in the choices we make, especially with regard to the foods we eat.

There are several ways to do this. One is to purchase organic produce, meat, and eggs when we are able to do so. Another is through the food choices we make: by choosing unprocessed whole foods, low in sugar and high in colorful plant foods. Two superfood categories to include are cruciferous vegetables and alliums. These two categories increase processes called "phase 1" and "phase 2" detox. In phase 1, the body takes harmful chemicals and toxins and, in starting the process of removal, actually makes them more toxic. During phase 2, the body is able to not only neutralize these toxins, but also package them for removal from the body. Therefore, it's critical that phase 1 does not move more toxins than phase 2 can handle! We must strive for balance between these phases.

In striving for balance, we can do two things: decrease phase 1 and increase phase 2. Phase 1 speeds up when we are exposed to toxins, coffee, medications (prescription and over the counter - but never stop medications without discussing with your prescriber), as well as in the presence of certain nutrients like vitamin C, some B vitamins, cruciferous vegetables, and magnesium, among others. Increasing phase 1 is not a bad thing, as long as it is balanced with phase 2! The best ways to increase phase 2, are by consuming cruciferous vegetables and alliums, as well as, other sulfur-rich foods (e.g. meat and egg yolks), and in some cases adding in other targeted nutrients, such as vitamin B12 and molybdenum.

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Cruciferous Vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables are high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals, especially sulfur. They also contain indole-3-carbinol (I3C) and other important natural phytochemicals. These elements change the way estrogen is metabolized and may prevent estrogen-driven cancers. They also provide tremendous support to the liver for detoxification. Chopping or chewing cruciferous vegetables results in the formation of these bio-active products. Eating these vegetables either raw, lightly sautéed, quickly stir-fried, or steamed is best to retain the full array of nutrients. But the most important thing is to eat more of them!

There are many to choose from, so if you're choosing these wonderfully nutritious vegetables as a regular part of your diet, be sure to keep up the variety. If you wish to experiment with them raw, try juicing, fresh salads, marinated salads, and adding sprouts or greens to your sandwiches. If you're cooking them, try steaming, sautéing, stir-frying, and roasting. In all cases, try to avoid microwaving vegetables in plastic bags, as the process may destroy more nutrients in foods and can transfer harmful compounds from the plastics.



Arugula



Daikon



Radish



Bok choy



Flowering cabbage



Rapini (broccoli rabe)



Broccoflower



Garden cress



Real wasabi



Broccoli, greens and sprouts



Horseradish



Rutabaga



Brussels sprout



Kale (green, red, lacinato, etc.)



Siberian kale



Cabbage



Kohlrabi



Tatsoi



Cauliflower



Komatsuna



Turnip root, greens



Chinese broccoli (kai-lan)



Mizuna



Watercress



Chinese cabbage



Mustard seeds (black, brown, white)



Collard greens



Napa cabbage

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Alliums

Alliums refer to foods from the onion family, and one of their most prized components, just like cruciferous vegetables, is sulfur (this is also what contributes to their unique odor!). They additionally contain fiber and a range of vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. They are protective against cancer, can help to regulate blood pressure (especially garlic), are antimicrobial, decrease blood sugar levels, support the liver, and are helpful with allergies due to their quercetin content (especially onions).

Pro tip: Chop or crush raw garlic and let it sit for at least 10 minutes before using. This allows garlic's compounds to chemically react and create allicin, which is antimicrobial, anti-hypertensive, cholesterol-reducing, and blood sugar-regulating.

Alliums can be quite tasty and sweet or pungent, depending on how they are grown and prepared. They can be eaten raw, cooked into soups or sauces, sauteed, grilled, or roasted, or used as garnish. All parts are edible: bulb, stem, and flower.



Chive



Green onion (scallions)



Ramp



Garlic



Leek



Shallot



Garlic powder



Onion (red, white, yellow)



Wild onion



Garlic Scape