

Broccoli: Why in Terms of Nutrition it is Likely the King of Vegetables (and a Great Broccoli Recipe)

by www.SixWise.com

Kids run from it, parents push it, yet almost everyone likes it if it's covered in cheese. It's broccoli, the cancer-fighting super vegetable that seems to trump just about all other vegetables with its health-promoting properties.

Here in America, we have Italian immigrants to thank for this nutritious veggie. Broccoli first developed from wild cabbage growing in ancient Rome, and eventually was brought to the United States by Italian immigrants during colonial times.

Broccoli, a member of the [cruciferous family of vegetables](#), is loaded with valuable nutrients, such as vitamins K, C, E, B6 and A, as well as folate, fiber, phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium. But it's broccoli's other phytochemicals that really make it stand out in the nutritional scene.

If you're looking for a way to make your diet healthier, adding broccoli is an easy place to start, and here's why.

1. Fight Cancer

Broccoli is well known for its cancer-fighting abilities, particularly in regard to lung, colon, breast, prostate and ovarian cancers. It contains glucosinolates, which are phytochemicals that break down into indoles, sulforaphane and other beneficial compounds.

Indole-3-carbinol, for instance, deactivates an estrogen metabolite that promotes tumor growth, particularly in breast cells. It's also been found to keep cancer cells from spreading to other parts of your body.

Sulforaphane, meanwhile, has been found to increase your liver's ability to detoxify carcinogenic compounds and free radicals. This in turn protects against cell mutations, cancer and other harmful effects.

2. Detoxify Your Body

Broccoli contains phytonutrients that signal your genes to increase the production of enzymes that help your body to detoxify harmful compounds, including potential carcinogens.

3. Reduce Your Risk of Stomach Ulcers

The sulforaphane in broccoli has been found to eliminate H. pylori bacteria, one of the primary causes of ulcers.

4. Help Repair Sun-Damaged Skin

Sulforaphane is also beneficial for your skin. A study published in Cancer Letters



Eating three to five one-cup servings of broccoli every week can reduce your risk of cancer, repair sun damage to your skin and much, much more.

found that broccoli extract, applied topically, counteracted skin cells' carcinogenic response to UV light in animal studies. The researchers suggested that the substance could help to reduce your risk of skin cancer after being exposed to sunlight.

5. Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease

According to a meta-analysis of seven prospective studies involved more than 100,000 people, those who ate the most broccoli had a 20 percent reduced risk of heart disease. (Frequent intake of tea, onions and apples also resulted in a reduced risk.)

6. Protect Your Eyes

Broccoli is rich in [lutein](#), a [carotenoid](#) that protects against cataracts and macular degeneration -- two of the most common age-related eye disorders in the United States.

7. Boost Your Immune System

Broccoli is loaded with vitamin C and beta-carotene, and contains some zinc and [selenium](#), all of which are excellent for building your immune system.

8. Build Strong Bones

One cup of cooked broccoli contains 74 mg of calcium and 123 mg of vitamin C, which helps your bones to absorb the calcium.

9. Fight Birth Defects

Pregnant women can benefit immensely from eating broccoli. It's rich in folic acid, a B-vitamin that's necessary to prevent several birth defects.

10. Help Your Brain Heal

Sulforaphane may help to boost the condition of the blood-brain barrier if it becomes damaged due to an injury, according to a study in The Journal of Neuroscience.

Still Not Convinced? Here are More Reasons to Eat Broccoli

- A study at the Harbor UCLA Medical Center in Torrance, California found that people who ate more broccoli (about four half-cup servings/week) were 50 percent less likely to develop colorectal cancer than those who never ate broccoli.
- Men who ate two or more half-cup servings of broccoli per week were 44 percent less likely to develop bladder cancer than men who ate less than one serving a week, according to researchers at Harvard and Ohio State universities.
- Rats fed broccoli sprouts and then injected with a carcinogen had smaller, fewer and slower-growing tumors than rats fed a regular diet, according to



The best way to prepare broccoli, nutrient-wise, is lightly steamed. The worst way is microwaved, as this seriously reduces its antioxidant levels.

a study at John Hopkins University in Baltimore.

You need to eat about three to five one-cup servings of broccoli each week to get these beneficial effects. If you simply can't stand broccoli, you can also eat broccoli sprouts.

Broccoli sprouts have 10-100 times the ability of mature broccoli to detoxify your body of potential carcinogens, and one tablespoon of broccoli sprouts has as much beneficial sulforaphane as one pound of full-grown broccoli. So feel free to indulge -- they're great on salads and sandwiches.

When choosing broccoli to eat, look for organically grown varieties, which will be free of pesticides and may also have higher levels of phytonutrients than conventionally grown broccoli.

The [way you cook your broccoli](#) can also impact its nutrient value. Whereas steaming lightly is an excellent way to cook broccoli that will retain most of the phytonutrients, microwaving broccoli has been found to reduce antioxidants by 74-90 percent. Of course, you can also [eat broccoli raw](#), which will preserve all of its nutrients.

Finally, if you're looking for a unique way to eat your broccoli, check out the delicious recipe below.

Beef and Broccoli Salad

Ingredients:

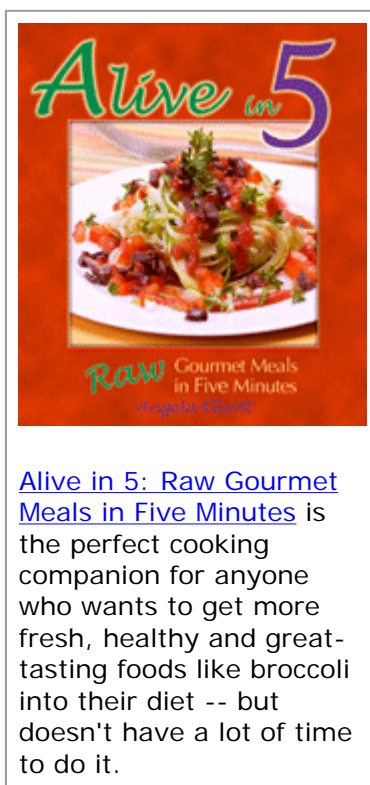
1 small flank steak, 1-1 1/2 pounds
salt & pepper to taste
4 cups broccoli flowerets, blanched
1 medium red onion, chopped
salad greens, washed and dried

Dressing:

1/4 cup Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot
1/3 cup soy sauce
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
3 tablespoons sesame oil
2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated
1 teaspoon sugar
dash of red pepper sauce
salt and pepper to taste

Method:

1. Salt and pepper meat, then broil flank steak until medium.
2. Slice when meat is cool enough to handle.
3. In a bowl combine all ingredients for the dressing; mix well.
4. Add onion, broccoli, and sliced steak; toss well to coat.
5. Serve on a bed of salad greens. Serves 4-6



[Alive in 5: Raw Gourmet Meals in Five Minutes](#) is the perfect cooking companion for anyone who wants to get more fresh, healthy and great-tasting foods like broccoli into their diet -- but doesn't have a lot of time to do it.