

What Are Cruciferous Vegetables?

The cruciferae are the family of plants that include the various familiar members of the species, Brassica oleracea. They contain essential antioxidants and are high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

Some include: broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, Brussels sprouts, and collards. Other examples of widely consumed cruciferous vegetables include: oriental cabbage (bok choy), arugula, watercress, radish, daikon, wasabi, and various mustard greens.

Why Are They Important?

There is much evidence about cruciferous vegetables and their protective effects against different types of cancer. Much research has been done on the unusual phytochemical known as glucosinolates in particular on the hydrolysis products, the isothiocyanates. The isothiocyanates modulate the activities of enzymes involved in the metabolism of carcinogens, especially by the induction of phase 2 detoxification enzymes in the liver that detoxify carcinogenic compounds from the body. A carcinogen is capable of causing cancer in living tissue.

Cruciferous Vegetables:

- Detoxify by up-regulating detoxification enzymes
- Prevent oxidative cell and DNA damage
- Are chemo-protective against numerous types of cancer.

How Should They Be Eaten?

Crucifers are best eaten raw in salads or lightly steamed, not boiled. When eaten raw make sure you chew very thoroughly to activate your own digestive enzymes.

Lightly steamed is best for those with a weak digestion and will help eliminate some of the gas and bloating. In the case of radishes, turnips and rutabagas lightly steam and eat their leafy tops too!

How Many Daily Servings?

Let's make it simple. Start with at least a fist-size serving, EVERY DAY, and try to double or triple that amount as you become more accustomed to this way of eating.

Evidence Shows...

The inverse association between crucifer consumption and cancer exists among several types of cancer, including:

- Bladder cancer
- Prostate cancer
- Breast cancer
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

Bottom-line:

Every day eat as many cruciferous vegetables in your diet as you can. Include them in each meal whether lightly steamed or raw! By eating 5-8 servings weekly you can experience gains in your health.