



6 Healthy Foods to Fight the Flu, Beat Stress and More

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Health by Barbara Brody on 1/23/2014 Comments

Sometimes the best medicine can be found at the end of a fork. Of course, you already know that vegging out — that is, [loading up on produce](#) — is crucial for good health. And while there's really no such thing as a *bad* choice when it comes to vegetables, some options are better than others if you have a specific concern in mind. “Fine-tuning your intake can actually help you meet your health goals,” says Tammy Lakatos Shames, R.D., co-author with sister Lyssie Lakatos, R.D. of [The Nutrition Twins' Veggie Cure: Expert Advice and Tantalizing Recipes for Health, Energy, and Beauty](#). Read on for their expert advice and dietary “prescriptions” to help you do just that.



Photo: [Pond5](#)

You want to: Keep colds and the flu at bay

Veggie Rx: Mushrooms

“Many people think mushrooms aren’t as healthy as other vegetables because they’re white,” says Tammy Lakatos Shames. But they’re packed with disease-fighting nutrients, and some are even great sources of vitamin D. [Studies](#) have shown that this fat-soluble vitamin may play a role in keeping the immune system strong and there are very few good dietary sources of it. One important note: only certain mushrooms provide this benefit, thanks to being grown under ultraviolet light. Check the package label, or seek out [Dole Portobello Mushrooms](#) and [Monterey Mushrooms](#).



Photo by [Perry Santanachote](#)

You want to: Bounce back from a hangover

Veggie Rx: Kale

This [trendy green](#) is popular for good reason. Not only is it high in water content — so it will rehydrate you while flushing out your system — it also contains specific nutrients (including sulfur compounds) that help to power your liver’s natural detoxification process. “It’s also rich in potassium, which helps beat bloat by restoring normal fluid balance in the body,” explains Lyssie Lakatos.



Photo: [Pond5](#)

You want to: Kick stress to the curb

Veggie Rx: Summer squash

Despite the name, [summer squash](#) (which includes zucchini) is available year-round in most grocery stores. “It gives you what I like to call an ‘internal massage,’” says Lyssie. Summer squash loaded with vitamin C, which reduces levels of the stress hormone cortisol in your bloodstream, as well as B vitamins, which help your body handle stress better. It is also a great source of magnesium and potassium; these minerals work together to relax blood vessels and lower your blood pressure.



Photo by [Perry Santanachote](#)

You want to: Feel more energized

Veggie Rx: Potatoes

When you're feeling sluggish it's tempting to reach for a quick fix like a candy bar, which is bound to spike your blood sugar and then send it crashing back down. But potatoes — both the white and [sweet variety](#) — are a much better option. These complex carbs are digested slowly, so they provide a sustained energy boost. Potatoes also contain B6, says Tammy, which is essential for breaking down glycogen in the muscle and liver when your body needs some extra power.



Photo by [Renee Blair](#)

You want to: Lift yourself out of a funk

Veggie Rx: Spaghetti squash

Its delicious strands (just bake, cut it open and shred it with a fork) are reminiscent of angel hair pasta, but the best part is that it has tryptophan, an amino acid that promotes the release of mood-boosting serotonin in your brain. [Spaghetti squash](#) also contains specific nutrients that help convert the tryptophan in other foods you eat into serotonin. Plus, it's one of very few vegetables that provide some omega-3s and [research](#) has linked low levels of these healthy fatty acids to depression.



Photo: [Pond5](#)

You want to: Get the most out of your workout

Veggie Rx: Beets

These ruby-red superstars increase nitric oxide in your body, which benefits your heart and your athletic performance, says Tammy. Nitric oxide helps to promote the flow of oxygen, so it may improve your endurance and fight fatigue during your sweat session. Bonus: Eating beets (or drinking beet juice) helps fight bloating, so you'll look your best even before your new routine has a chance to really tighten and tone those muscles.

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