

# Spinach

It is believed that Spinach was cultivated over 2,000 years ago in Iran. In fact our name for spinach is even derived from the Persian word "ispanai" which means "green hand" and later became "spanachia" in Latin, which then in turn gave rise to the English "spinach". Where-ever and when ever spinach has been grown however, from the ancient Greeks through to Popeye, it has been universally acknowledged as a nutritional treasure trove.

This is because amongst other things, Spinach is an excellent source of iron, calcium, chlorophyll, beta carotene, vitamin C, riboflavin, sodium and potassium! Being a rich source of iron, it helps build the blood, an action which is further enhanced by its high chlorophyll content. Spinach's sulphur content helps to clean the liver and its Vitamin A content can even help prevent night blindness, especially when eaten in combination with carrots. But that's not all, in addition to this spinach contains two phytochemicals, lutein and zeaxanthin, that seem to ward off macular degeneration, yet another leading cause of blindness.

Spinach is also jam packed with folate, a B vitamin considered so important that it is now routinely added to flour. Folate not only prevents neural-tube defects in babies but also lowers blood levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that irritates blood vessels and is linked to heart disease. As you may have heard before however, Spinach can partially interfere with the absorption of calcium because of its high content of oxalic-acid, so it is important to supplement other greens into your diet such as Kale, watercress and silver beet.

It is said that calorie for calorie, leafy green vegetables like spinach provide more nutrients than any other food on earth, and the best thing is, unlike many supplements and exotic super foods, Spinach is easily available and relatively inexpensive. Researchers have now identified at least 13 different flavonoid compounds in spinach that function as powerful antioxidants and anti-cancer agents. Apparently the anticancer properties of these spinach compounds have been so impressive that they have prompted researchers to create specialized spinach extracts that can be used in controlled studies. One such study on adult women living in New England showed that intake of spinach was inversely related to incidence of breast cancer, and another study has shown that spinach reduces incidence of prostate cancer. But don't wait for the research to prove what your mother always knew, simply eat your spinach!

But like Popeye, always eat organic!

- The Barefoot Doctor