

## Eat Those Fruits & Vegetables

Remember how mom was always nagging you to eat those peas and broccoli? If she was like mine she said something like, “You’re not leaving the dinner table until you eat all of that broccoli and don’t even think about feeding it to the dog!!!” Well, yet again mom was right. It turns out that eating lots of fruits and vegetables is one of the best nutritional habits you can have. Not only are fruits and vegetables low in fat and calories making them ideal foods for weight loss, but they are also high in vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytochemicals. Okay, so you’ve heard many of these things before. You know that you need to get an adequate amount of vitamins and minerals (100% of the Recommended Dietary Allowances-not more, you can overdose) to prevent disease. And you know that fiber can help prevent cancer and heart disease, lower cholesterol, and of course keep you regular. But what are those Phytowhato??? Phytochemicals literally means “plant chemicals”. They are small molecules like vitamins and minerals that are found in all kinds of plants, fruit, and vegetables. Approximately 4000 have been identified, but only 150 have been studied. Many of the phytochemicals that have been studied are proving to be beneficial in preventing many diseases including many different types of cancers, hypertension, and heart disease. For instance, dark leafy vegetables have the phytochemicals lutein and zeaxanthin, which may be hard to say, but they’ll help keep your eyes healthy. Sulforophane found in broccoli may help prevent breast cancer. Capsaicin found in hot peppers may help with arthritic pain. Lycopene found in tomatoes and watermelon may prevent prostate cancer and heart disease. With more than 150 of these plant chemicals I could go on and on with a litany of the diseases they can help prevent, but I’ll spare you the list. Just take note of the bottom line. Listen to mom, **EAT YOUR BROCCOLI!**