## How food nourishes and protects your body

Many nutrients in food promote health and protect your body from disease.

Eating whole, nutritious foods is important because their unique substances work synergistically to create an effect that can’t be replicated by taking a supplement.

[Cards]:-

### Vitamins and minerals

[image:minerals]

Although your body only needs small amounts of vitamins and minerals, they’re vital for your health.

However, Western diets — high in processed foods and low in whole foods like fresh produce — are typically deficient in vitamins and minerals. Such [deficiencies](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/7-common-nutrient-deficiencies) can substantially increase your risk of disease .

For example, insufficient intakes of [vitamin C](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/vitamin-c-foods), vitamin D, and folate may harm your heart, cause immune dysfunction, and increase your risk of certain cancers, respectively

### Beneficial plant compounds

[image:plants]

Nutritious foods, including vegetables, fruits, beans, and grains, boast numerous beneficial compounds, such as antioxidants.

[Antioxidants](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/antioxidants-explained) protect cells from damage that may otherwise lead to disease .

In fact, studies demonstrate that people whose diets are rich in polyphenol antioxidants have lower rates of depression, [diabetes](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/prevent-diabetes), dementia, and heart disease

Polyphenols are naturally occurring compounds found largely in the fruits, vegetables, cereals and beverages. Fruits like grapes, apple, pear, cherries and berries contains up to 200–300 mg polyphenols per 100 grams fresh weight. The products manufactured from these fruits, also contain polyphenols in significant amounts. Typically a glass of red wine or a cup of tea or coffee contains about 100 mg polyphenols. Cereals, dry legumes and chocolate also contribute to the polyphenolic intake

### Fiber

[image:fibers]

Fiber is an essential part of a healthy diet. It not only promotes proper digestion and elimination but also feeds the [beneficial bacteria in your gut](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/gut-microbiome-and-health) .

Thus, [high-fiber foods](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/22-high-fiber-foods) like vegetables, beans, grains, and fruits help protect against disease, decrease inflammation, and boost your immune system.

On the other hand, low-fiber diets are associated with an increased risk of illnesses, including colon cancer and stroke.

### Protein and healthy fats

[image:proteins]

The protein and fat in whole, nutritious foods play various critical roles in your body.

[Amino acids](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/essential-amino-acids) — the building blocks of protein — aid immune function, muscle synthesis, metabolism, and growth, while fats provide fuel and help absorb nutrients.

[Omega-3 fatty acids](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/omega-3-guide), which are found in foods like fatty fish, help regulate inflammation and are linked to improved heart and immune health.