

Prescription for Health:

Top Picks for What Ails You

Some doctors are prescribing fruits and vegetables, along with a diet rich in grains and low in fat, to help treat certain illnesses. These ideas will help you take advantage of the natural healing and preventive properties in some foods.

Colorful control

A diet high in fruits and vegetables helps prevent certain diseases including diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. They can also help in treatment and control; here are some examples:

- *Diabetes.* Magnesium, found in foods like green, leafy vegetables, may improve insulin sensitivity. In addition, the soluble fiber in fruits and vegetables — especially apples, pears, oranges, carrots, and peas — helps control blood sugar levels.
- *Heart disease.* Several components in fruits and vegetables add to a heart-healthy prescription. Flavonoids may help prevent blood clots, soluble fiber and certain phytochemicals help reduce blood cholesterol levels, and magnesium is thought to help relax arteries.
- *High blood pressure.* A diet high in fruits and vegetables — 8-10

servings a day — has been shown to lower blood pressure. It's thought the potassium helps make blood vessels stronger while magnesium helps them relax. This prescription comes in a package called the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) which is rich in produce and lean dairy products.

Quick relief

Fruits and vegetables also provide quick relief for what ails you. Before you reach into your medicine cabinet, don't forget about some of the remedies in your kitchen:

- *Honey-lemon throat healer.* For a cold and cough, mix 2 parts honey with 1 part lemon juice. The honey will soothe your throat and act as an expectorant. The lemon juice helps thin and loosen phlegm. Take this as is or add it to hot water.
- *Food and mood.* Fruits and vegetables are high on the list of "comfort foods" that warm and relax you, like hearty vegetable soups, apple sauce, mashed potatoes, and pureed yams.

