

leafy greens that contain beta-carotene, such as collard greens, spinach, and Swiss chard, contribute to the growth and repair of the body's tissues. Beta-carotene may also protect your skin against sun damage. Beta-carotene is converted to vitamin A in the body, and food sources of beta-carotene are the best way to get your vitamin A fix, since extremely high doses of vitamin A in supplements can be toxic and lead to bone, liver, and neural disorders as well as birth defects. Food sources of beta-carotene are entirely safe, though, since the body regulates how much beta-carotene is converted into vitamin A.

Leafy greens are an excellent source of folate, which can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease and memory loss. And since folate contributes to the production of serotonin, it may help ward off depression and improve mood.

The vitamin E found in green leafy vegetables works with vitamin C to keep skin healthy as you age. This vitamin also helps protect your skin from the sun's damaging rays and may help reduce your risk of cataracts and macular degeneration.

While leafy greens offer many health benefits, they can sometimes trigger IBS in individuals who are sensitive. Additionally, if you're taking a blood thinner like warfarin (Coumadin), be sure to have your doctor monitor your blood and your medication dosage as you increase your intake of dark leafy green vegetables. These vegetables are rich in vitamin K, which plays a key role in blood clotting.