

[IMAGE]

Not Your Average Vegetable

By Editorial Staff

Broccoli on a fork. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark There are dozens of vegetables that are important for a healthy diet. But in a head-to-head competition, one vegetable outshines the rest: broccoli. It is loaded with vitamin A, has more vitamin C than an orange and as much calcium as a glass of milk. One medium-sized spear has three times more fiber than a slice of wheat-bran bread. Over the past few years, studies have shown broccoli may help prevent colon cancer, minimize the risk of cataracts and protect against stroke. And that's just the beginning. New research indicates broccoli also can help skin cells fight against sun damage.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University recently discovered that an extract derived from newly sprouted broccoli seeds reduced skin redness and damage by more than one-third as compared to untreated skin. Six people were tested with different doses of the extract on several small patches of skin, which were then exposed to UV radiation sufficient to cause varying degrees of sunburn. At the highest doses, the extract reduced redness and swelling by approximately 37 percent. The benefits were long-lasting, with notable effects lasting two days after treatment. While sunscreen blocks, absorbs or scatters ultraviolet rays, the broccoli extract actually helped boost the production of protective enzymes that defend against UV damage.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S., affecting more than 1 million Americans every year and causing more than 10,000 deaths per year. Scientists are hopeful that broccoli may play a role in protecting against UV exposure. So, by all means, load up on broccoli and its cruciferous relatives - cauliflower, kale, cabbage, brussels sprouts and bok choy.

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