LONGEVITY ROADMAP

Become Young at Any Age

This article is written by one of my favorite food medicine doctors, Dr Mark Hyman. Dr Hyman is an internationally recognized leader, speaker, educator, and advocate in his field. He is Head of Strategy and Innovation at the Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine, the found and director of The UltraWellness Center, and board member for The Institute of Functional Medicine.

'Dr. Hyman believes that we all deserve a life of vitality—and that we have the potential to create it for ourselves. That's why he is dedicated to tackling the root causes of chronic disease by harnessing the power of Functional Medicine to transform health care. Dr. Hyman and his team, work ever day to empower people. organizations, and communities to heal their bodies and minds and improve our social and economic resilience.'

In the *Longevity Roadmap Docu-series,* you learned about the power of phytochemicals. These are the thousands of powerful compounds in plants and even some animal foods that not only support the prevention of chronic disease but contribute to optimal health.

There are 25,000+ known phytochemicals in the plant kingdom to date, and they've only recently been deemed critical. While deficiency of these phytochemicals may not result in an acute disease like scurvy or rickets or in protein malnutrition, it can lead to long-latency deficiency diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, dementia, depression, and more. The best way to take advantage of all the disease-fighting power of phytochemicals is to eat deeply colorful plant foods.

You've likely heard of phytochemicals before such as polyphenols, resveratrol, flavonoids, and carotenoids, just to name a few. Take, for example, anthocyanins, which are a type of flavonoid. This is what gives fruits like blueberries their deep purple and blue color. Studies show that anthocyanins can significantly improve brain function and reduce depressive symptoms. Foods rich in anthocyanins also contain antioxidants that fight off free radicals that contribute to rapid aging.

This is just one example of one compound. Think of all of the colorful plant foods that you see in the supermarket and the hundreds of plants that we could eat. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors ate more than 800 varieties of plant foods. Could it be that we would take our health to the next level if we prioritized these foods?

One of my favorite ways to instantly upgrade your diet is to eat the rainbow, and no, I don't mean skittles. I mean all of the colorful, beautiful plants that line the periphery of your grocery store. Each color represented holds a special superpower

if you will that targets different areas of your health. **We are discovering more and more every single day about the profound ways the phytonutrients in these foods interact with our body, sending messages of health.**

For now, I want to give you a crash course in the ways that colorful foods and their phytochemical content impact our health.

BLUE-PURPLE signals the presence of anthocyanins in foods like eggplants, beets, blueberries, red cabbage, and purple potatoes. Anthocyanins have been found to prevent blood clots, delay cellular aging, and may even slow the onset of Alzheimer's.

GREEN indicates the presence of phytochemicals like sulforaphane, isocyanates, and indoles, which are anticarcinogenic and detoxifying. Many green veggies are part of the Brassica family, which includes broccoli, Brussels sprouts, bok choy, arugula, kale, cauliflower, and more.

ORANGE means the compounds alpha-carotene and beta-carotene are present and can be seen in foods like carrots, pumpkin, acorn squash, and sweet potatoes. Alpha-carotene protects against cancer and benefits skin and eye health; beta-carotene is a precursor to vitamin A and a powerful antioxidant within the body.

PALE GREEN-WHITE is caused by compounds called allicins, which have powerful anticancer, antitumor, immune-boosting, and antimicrobial properties. These are present in garlic, onions, leeks, and others. Many of these same foods contain antioxidant flavonoids like quercetin and kaempferol.

RED indicates a carotenoid called lycopene, found in tomatoes, bell peppers, and carrots. Asparagus also actually contains a good amount of lycopene—proof that you can't always judge a book by its cover. Lycopene is protective against heart disease and cancer due to its powerful antioxidant activity.

YELLOW-GREEN means a food contains the carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin, which are especially beneficial for the eyes and help protect the heart against atherosclerosis. Vegetables in this group may not always appear yellowish. In addition to yellow summer squash and orange bell peppers, spinach, collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens, peas, and even avocados all contain these powerful nutrients.

I named at least 25 different plant foods above. How many do you get weekly? The science of longevity teaches us that we can use the power of food to create lasting health. The lesson for this week is to aim for a variety of colors daily.

If you want to dive deeper into how to use food as medicine and build your farmacy, check out my brand new book, ***The Pegan Diet***, which explains how to eat to boost all 7 systems of the Functional Medicine matrix and take back our health with easy to implement principles for anyone at any stage of their journey.