

Although winter months are often synonymous with dreaded cold or flu-like symptoms, when it comes to warding off infectious germs, nothing reaps more positive health benefits than fueling your diet with nutrients. Rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber, in order to help maintain and strengthen your immune system, certain foods bring truth to the saying, "You are what you eat."

## BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries contain anthocyanins and other antioxidant pigments and phytochemicals, which may have a role in reducing the risks of some diseases including cancer. According to clinical nutritionists, one cup per day is an ideal amount and it seems that you can't possibly overeat these power packed berries! You can even freeze them and eat them frozen but do stay away from the sweetened variety otherwise you totally defeat the purpose.

## PLAIN YOGURT

This dairy product produced by the bacterial fermentation of milk has huge nutritional benefits. It is loaded with probiotics - and what are they? Probiotics are essential in keeping you healthy all year long, and creating a good bacteria line that the intestines use in warding off 'invaders'. They also help in optimal absorption of nutrients. Recommended portion is a cup a day of the non-fat or low fat varieties. If you find this too plain and boring, get adventurous and add scoops of nuts or mixed *unsweetened* mixed berries.

## BROCCOLI

Filled with health promoting vitamins, minerals and fiber, broccoli is still one of the most nutritional foods which packs a punch, especially during winter months when immune systems are low. Low in calories, it contains over 150 health promoting phytochemicals such as sulforaphane. Known for its cancer protective powers, broccoli certainly is at the top of the healthy foods list. Experts recommend consuming at least one cruciferous vegetable on a daily basis, such as 1/2 cup of broccoli.

## CITRUS FRUITS

Grapefruits, oranges and tangerines or citrus fruits are some of the healthiest winter foods which help keep you strong. They provide vitamin C, which your body especially

winter day than a warm bowl of soup. When it comes to eating the "right" types of soup, experts suggest going for a heart healthy bowl that's low in sodium and high in fiber. Looking for variety? Mix it up with a variety of vegetables such as beans, spinach and carrots, keeping the calories low and fiber content high.



## WINTER SQUASH

The nutritional composition of winter squash, such as butternut squash, packs the perfect blend of nutrients to help keep winter colds at bay. Just to give you an idea, one cup of butternut squash provides about 450 percent of your daily Vitamin A needs, which happens to be a key player in maintaining a healthy immune system. In addition, winter squash has vitamin C, iron and calcium as well. A simple way to enjoy winter squash is to cook it just like you would the *desi* squash such as *ghia* or *tori*.

## KALE

This dark leafy green is without a doubt one of the healthiest foods you can eat providing more nutrition per unit calorie than almost any other food. Not convinced yet? Kale provides seventeen essential nutrients including 100 percent of the RDA for vitamin A and vitamin C in a single serving. It also tops the list of the most potent antioxidant vegetable.

The recommendation is at least one cup daily. Enjoy this vegetable by simply sautéing it in a pan.

needs a boost of during the winter to keep your immune system up. For example, one grapefruit provides about 130 percent of your daily vitamin C needs!

## APPLES

An apple a day keeps the doctor away, especially during the long winter months. In order to get the maximum benefit out of this fruit, all of it must be eaten except the core. Almost half of the vitamin C content is just underneath the skin. Apples are rich in fiber, a source of both soluble and insoluble fiber and one medium apple, or half a cup a day, is the recommended ideal portion.

## HEART HEALTHY SOUP

Nothing sounds more welcoming on a cold

## PUMPKIN

Pumpkin is often overlooked for its nutritional components but it packs a punch when it comes to a convenient, inexpensive food bolstered by nutrients. It is low in calories, high in fiber and provides the most concentrated package of disease-busting carotenoids known to us. Canned pumpkin is an underutilized power packed food. Carotenoids play a central role in the health of your heart, eyes, skin and the immune system, which makes this food particularly effective in the winter.