



# NEWS

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## **Go For The Greens During National Nutrition Month!**

**Norristown, PA (March 14, 2013)** – March begins the season of green. Spring is coming, St Patrick’s Day celebrations are in order, and Earth Day is just around the corner. The color green is synonymous with a time of renewal and vital energy. If there’s one color that Americans can strive to have more of on their plates, it’s green! March is also National Nutrition Month, an opportunity to take notice of the benefits of healthy eating.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 25% of adults consume the recommended daily allowance of vegetables (3 or more servings per day). Leafy green vegetables are the most lacking of all. Leafy green vegetables are nutrition powerhouses and adding them to the diet is essential for lasting health. Greens are a rich source of calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium, phosphorous, zinc, and vitamins A, C, E, and K. They also boast fiber and a range of phytonutrients (plant-based nutrients that are health protective). Research suggests that the nutrients in dark leafy greens may prevent certain types of cancer and promote heart health. Chlorophyll is responsible for the green pigment of leafy greens and is essential in supporting the health of the circulatory, digestive, immune, and detoxification systems. Note that most of the vitamins in dark leafy greens are fat soluble, meaning it’s best to eat them with a healthy source of fat such as virgin olive oil or flax seed oil.

There are many types of dark leafy greens. Some of the most common (and easy to find in the produce section of the grocery store) include: spinach, kale, collard greens, Swiss chard, arugula, bok choy, and cabbage. They can be eaten raw, steamed, boiled, or sautéed in oil, broth, or water. Spinach and Swiss chard are best eaten when cooked because they are high in oxalic acid, which can deplete calcium. Three cups of raw spinach, for example, have 90 milligrams of calcium, whereas one cup of cooked spinach has nearly three times that amount (259 milligrams). Cooking vegetables also increases the amount of magnesium and iron that's available to the body. Cooking with these greens is

quick and easy – and nearly impossible to mess up! Plus, they store easily in the refrigerator, making them ideal for busy lifestyles!

Generally, the darker green the vegetable, the more nutrient-dense it will be. Look for opportunities to make a simple shift to get more of these dark leafy greens into meals! Here are some ideas:

- Shift from iceberg or romaine lettuce to mixed greens, arugula, or another dark leafy green
- Blend cooked greens into tomato sauce to get some extra nutrients
- Add chopped greens to a morning omelet to get a serving of greens for breakfast
- Use a heartier green leaf (kale, Swiss chard, cabbage) as a wrap, and skip the tortilla
- Add chopped greens to soups or stews – they'll cook faster than most other veggies, so add them within the last 5-15 minutes of cooking

In recognition of National Nutrition Month, go for the greens!