



## **The Number One Food for Athletes (and Weekend Warriors)**

**Alan Tyson PT, ATC**

When you come into the clinic or training center and we talk about nutrition, we will often discuss how much protein you are eating each day. After that we will talk about that dreaded color that most of us don't like on our plates and one that we definitely don't get enough. That color is "Green" and the best vegetable that represents "Green" is **Broccoli**. If I could choose one vegetable that our athletes, clients, parents, etc. would eat each day it would be broccoli hands down. Take a look below at 9 health benefits of this super food. Also I highly recommend going to YouTube, type in "Sesame Street Broccoli song" and share with your love ones. This will surely bring a smile to your face and again emphasize the importance of this veggie.

### **9 Health Benefits of Broccoli**

#### **1. Cancer Prevention (I know athletes may not think about this but parents do)**

Broccoli contains glucoraphanin, which the body processes into the anti-cancer compound sulforaphane. This compound rids the body of *H. pylori*, a bacterium found to highly increase the risk of gastric cancer. Furthermore, broccoli contains indole-3-carbinol, a powerful antioxidant compound and anti-carcinogen found to not only hinder the growth of breast, cervical and prostate cancer, but also boosts liver function.

Broccoli shares these cancer fighting, immune boosting properties with other cruciferous vegetables such as cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and cabbage.

#### **2. Cholesterol Reduction (again I know athletes don't think about this but parents do)**

Like many whole foods, broccoli is packed with soluble fiber that draws cholesterol out of your body.

#### **3. Reducing Allergy Reaction and Inflammation (now we have something that everyone needs to reduce)**

Broccoli is a particularly rich source of kaempferol and isothiocyanates, both anti-inflammatory phyto-nutrients. Research has shown the ability of kaempferol to lessen the impact of allergy-related substances on our body. Broccoli even has appreciable amounts of omega 3 fatty acids, which are well known as an anti-inflammatory.

#### **4. Powerful Antioxidant (Great for Recovery – who doesn't need this!)**

Of all the cruciferous vegetables, broccoli stands out as the most concentrated source of vitamin C, plus the flavonoids necessary for vitamin C to recycle effectively. Also concentrated in broccoli are the carotenoids lutein, zeaxanthin and beta-carotene, other powerful antioxidants.

#### **5. Bone Health (very important for all athletes especially females)**

Broccoli contains high levels of both calcium and vitamin K, both of which are important for bone health and prevention of osteoporosis.

#### **6. Heart Health**

The anti-inflammatory properties of sulforaphane, one of the isothiocyanates (ITCs) in broccoli, may be able to prevent (or even reverse) some of the damage to blood vessel linings that can be caused by inflammation due to chronic blood sugar problems.

#### **7. Detoxification (helps influence recovery)**

Glucoraphanin, gluconasturtiin and glucobrassicin are special phytonutrients that support all steps in the body's detox process, including activation, neutralization and elimination of unwanted contaminants. These three are in the perfect combination in broccoli. Broccoli also contains isothiocyanates (which you read about in inflammation) which help control the detox process at a genetic level.

#### **8. Diet Aid (Most Athletes don't need this but fiber is critical for digestive health and recovery)**

Broccoli is a smart carb and is high in fiber, which aids in digestion, prevents constipation, maintains low blood sugar, and curbs overeating. Furthermore, a cup of broccoli has as much protein as a cup of rice or corn with half the calories.

#### **9. Alkalizes Your Body**

Like many vegetables, broccoli helps keep your whole body less acidic, which has a host of health benefits. Your body has a natural pH level and it likes to be 7.0 or slightly lower which aids many of the body functions.

I had an Ardrey Kell athlete that I helped many years ago and we talked about less fried foods and more "green food". He was looking for all the edges he could to become better and he took up the habit of eating broccoli multiple times a week. Not only did he become more lean and lost body fat he went on the pitch in college and the major leagues. I am not saying broccoli will earn you a college scholarship and a big league contract but it definitely won't hurt ☺. Alex Wood – Congrats on making it to the Big Leagues with the Atlanta Braves!!!

**\*\*Remember to**

- 1. Always plan ahead for what you are going to eat**
- 2. Obtain adequate amounts of protein**
- 3. Work on Flexibility**
- 4. Supplement your diet with a fish oil and multi-vitamin**

**Let me know if I can help. Email me at [architechsports@gmail.com](mailto:architechsports@gmail.com)**

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**God Bless,**

**Alan Tyson**

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