

Fresh Picks

How We Got Our Scores

We calculated a score for each vegetable by adding up its percentage of the recommended daily intake for eight nutrients plus lutein (and its twin, zeaxanthin) and carotenoids other than lutein. We used the Daily Value (DV) for all but two: Lutein and other carotenoids have no DV, so we devised our own recommended intakes.

We counted each nutrient equally. For example, a serving of cooked kale has 141 percent of our target for lutein and 50 percent of our target for other carotenoids, plus 296 percent of the DV for vitamin K, 17 percent of the DV for vitamin C, 14 percent for folate, 12 percent for fiber, 10 percent for calcium, 5 percent for magnesium, 4 percent for iron, and 3 percent for potassium. That gives it a score of 552 points.

We counted calcium, iron, folate, and magnesium in our scores but they're not in the chart. Ditto for carotenoids other than lutein, which include alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, beta-cryptoxanthin, and lycopene.

The scores are for 3 oz. of each vegetable. That's ½ to ¾ cup (or 1½ to 2 cups of raw leafy greens). But with only 15 to 25 calories in a serving of many veggies, why stop at just one?

Unless noted, the numbers in the chart are for cooked vegetables.

Superstars (200+)	Score	Lutein	Vitamin K	Vitamin C	Potassium	Fiber	Calories
Mustard greens	975	+	+	○	○	○	20
Spinach	948	+	+	○	○	○	20
Swiss chard	716	+	+	○	○	○	15
Turnip greens	712	+	+	○	○	○	15
Collard greens	648	+	+	○	○	○	30
Beet greens	606	○	+	○	○	○	25
Kale	552	+	+	○	○	○	30
Radicchio, raw	467	+	+	○	○	○	20
Watercress, raw	458	+	+	○	○	○	10
Carrots	398	○	○	○	○	○	30
Broccoli rabe	390	○	+	○	○	○	20
Sweet potato	379	○	○	○	○	○	80
Pumpkin, canned	376	○	○	○	○	○	30
Romaine lettuce, raw	339	○	○	○	○	○	15
Red leaf lettuce, raw	303	○	○	○	○	○	10
Green leaf lettuce, raw	298	○	○	○	○	○	15
Butternut squash	295	○	○	○	○	○	35
Arugula, raw	291	+	○	○	○	○	20
Broccoli	266	○	○	○	○	○	30
Endive, raw	262	○	+	○	○	○	15
Scallions, raw	256	○	+	○	○	○	25
Brussels sprouts	246	○	○	○	○	○	30
Red bell pepper	238	○	○	+	○	○	25
Escarole	224	○	+	○	○	○	15
Butter lettuce, raw	201	○	○	○	○	○	10

Veggie Good (50-199)	Score	Lutein	Vitamin K	Vitamin C	Potassium	Fiber	Calories
Chinese broccoli (gai lan)	187	○	○	○	○	○	20
Green peas	171	○	○	○	○	○	70
Bok choy	154	○	○	○	○	○	10
Cabbage	137	○	○	○	○	○	20
Snow or sugar snap peas	137	○	○	○	○	○	35
Tomatoes	135	○	○	○	○	○	15
Asparagus	133	○	○	○	○	○	20
Fennel, raw	122	○	○	○	○	○	25
Green bell pepper	113	○	○	○	○	○	25
Green beans	101	○	○	○	○	○	30
Red cabbage	94	○	○	○	○	○	25
Okra	93	○	○	○	○	○	20
Avocado, raw	92	○	○	○	○	○	140
Zucchini	87	○	○	○	○	○	15
Artichoke hearts	85	○	○	○	○	○	45
Leeks	82	○	○	○	○	○	25
Lima beans	80	○	○	○	○	○	100
Cauliflower	76	○	○	○	○	○	20
Kohlrabi	71	○	○	○	○	○	25
Celery, raw	62	○	○	○	○	○	10
Yellow corn	62	○	○	○	○	○	80
Parsnips	54	○	○	○	○	○	60
Iceberg lettuce, raw	53	○	○	○	○	○	10
Tomatillos, raw	53	○	○	○	○	○	25

Gotta Love 'em (0-49)	Score	Lutein	Vitamin K	Vitamin C	Potassium	Fiber	Calories
Jicama, raw	46	○	○	○	○	○	30
Potato with skin	46	○	○	○	○	○	80
Shallots, raw	44	○	○	○	○	○	60
Beets	42	○	○	○	○	○	35
Radishes, raw	35	○	○	○	○	○	15
Rutabaga	35	○	○	○	○	○	25
White corn	33	○	○	○	○	○	80
Chayote squash	31	○	○	○	○	○	20
Cucumber with peel, raw	28	○	○	○	○	○	15
Turnips	27	○	○	○	○	○	20
Shiitake mushrooms	26	○	○	○	○	○	35
Portobello mushrooms	23	○	○	○	○	○	25
Onion	21	○	○	○	○	○	35
White (button) mushrooms	21	○	○	○	○	○	20
Eggplant	20	○	○	○	○	○	30
Spaghetti squash	19	○	○	○	○	○	25

KEY

Percentage of the recommended daily intake:

○ less than 2%

○ 2% to 10%

○ 11% to 50%

○ 51% to 100%

⊕ more than 100%

Recommended Daily Intakes

Lutein: 3,000 mcg¹
 Vitamin K: 120 mcg
 Vitamin C: 90 mg
 Potassium: 4,700 mg
 Fiber: 28 g

Other carotenoids: 3,000 mcg¹
 Folate: 400 mcg DFE
 Calcium: 1,300 mg
 Iron: 18 mg
 Magnesium: 420 mg

¹ Estimate based on typical intakes.
 Unless noted, vegetables are cooked.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Data Central.

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