

Natural Health News

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KALE—GREEN VEGETABLE SUPERSTAR



Kale has recently become very popular as a “superfood”. Kale is a member of the cruciferous vegetable family which is renowned for its many healthy compounds and outstanding health benefits including the ability to fight and prevent cancer. Other members of this vegetable family include arugula, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, mustard greens, radish, turnip, and watercress. Until the end of the Middle Ages, kale was one of the most common green vegetables in Europe. Russian kale was introduced into the United States in the 19th century by Russian traders after they first introduced it to Canada. Kale is one of the easiest crops to grow in home gardens and by local farmers—thriving in small plots of land and personal gardens. Kale is especially high in vitamins K, A, and C and is also a great source of calcium, magnesium, iron, and antioxidants. It especially contains abundant antioxidants which help remove free radicals from the body which can lead to accelerated aging as well as cancer and other serious diseases. It only takes 100 calories of kale to provide over 350 mg for the most basic omega-3 fatty acid (alpha-linolenic acid, or ALA). Kale provides comprehensive support for the body’s detoxification system. New research has shown that the antioxidants can help regulate detoxification at the cellular level. Kale has a good balance of the omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, which is essential for heart health. Kale is also a good source of the mineral potassium and vitamin K, another must for excellent heart health. Kale helps manage diabetes in a number of ways. Kale’s sulfur content aids with diabetes because of its role in detoxification as well as the production of glutathione, one of the body’s most important antioxidants. Sulfur is also extremely important for glucose metabolism, helping to decrease the likelihood of weight gain and the risk of diabetes. One cup of cooked kale contains 10% of daily fiber needs. Increased fiber can reduce blood glucose levels. Kale has at least 45 different flavanoids, which may reduce the risk of stroke. It also contains significant iron, which helps in the formation of hemoglobin, the main carrier of oxygen to cells of the body, including the brain. The omega-3 fatty acids are also important for brain memory, performance, and behavioral function. The compound *sulforaphane* which is found in kale has anti-inflammatory properties that may help cognitive function, especially after an injury to the brain. The high fiber content of kale helps lower cholesterol levels because it picks up excess cholesterol compounds in the gut and pushes them out in the elimination process. Research has found that the fiber in steamed kale binds better to bile in the digestive tract, resulting in greater removal of cholesterol. Kale is listed as one of the “good-for-your-bones foods” by the National Osteoporosis Foundation because of its calcium content. One cup of cooked kale has about the same amount of calcium as one cup of cow’s milk and is also more easily assimilated. Sulfur helps in removing toxins from the skin, boosts the production of collagen (which keeps skin looking youthful), and aids in wound healing and reduces scarring. With just 33 calories per cup, kale is a popular diet food. As a source of magnesium—which is one of the minerals that most people are deficient in—kale supports the body in maintaining optimum digestion as well as manage stress. Kale is an exceptional food for lowering the risk of chronic inflammation. Many of the compounds in kale, such as vitamin K, are key nutrients for helping regulate the body’s inflammatory process. Inflammation often plays a key role in the development of cancer, particularly chronic inflammation. ~over~

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Research suggests that kale may be most helpful in protecting against bladder, breast, colon, ovary, and prostate cancer. The *glucosinolates* found in kale are utilized for DNA repair and help prevent cancer and slow the growth of cancer cells. Because kale contains oxalates, a naturally-occurring substance found in food (including leafy vegetables), you may hear cautions that eating kale could cause kidney stones. High oxalate levels can increase the concentration of calcium or oxalates in urine, causing kidney stones to form. However, kale, unlike many other leafy vegetables, has a very low oxalate level. That means that the calcium and iron found in kale are highly digestible. If you eat other leafy vegetables which are higher in oxalate levels, you can minimize the risk by chewing well and relaxing between meals—healthy habits we all should be doing anyway. After some information was published about possible connections between kale (and other cruciferous vegetables) and thyroid problems, kale has come under suspicion for being goitrogenic—the term used for a substance that could cause swelling or dysfunction of the thyroid gland. However, recent studies have shown that kale and other cruciferous vegetables do not interfere with thyroid function in healthy people. Even people with hypothyroidism can eat as much kale as they want if it is cooked. One real risk with kale is pesticide consumption. The Environmental Working Group lists kale on its “Dirty Dozen Plus” list of most contaminated foods. As a result, it is highly recommended that you choose organic kale, and be sure to wash it thoroughly prior to consumption. There are many ways to incorporate kale into your diet. You can massage it with a bit of olive oil, lemon juice and sea salt for the base of a green salad, blend it into smoothies, soups, or sauces, sauté it with other vegetables in a stir-fry, bake it into frittatas, lasagnas, or burgers—and even make it into kale chips. The bottom line is: don’t count kale out too quickly. It is simply too healthy to pass up—and if you get creative with how you prepare and combine it in recipes you might find that you like kale after all! Getting regular helpings of leafy green brain foods—like kale and swiss chard—can help keep dementia at bay according to new research.

Here is a **sautéed kale recipe**: Heat **3 TBSP. olive oil** in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add **2 cloves garlic (finely chopped)** and cook until soft, but not colored. Raise heat to high, add **1/2 cup vegetable or chicken stock or water** and **1 1/2 pounds young kale** (leaves and stems chopped) and toss to combine. Cover and cook for 5 minutes. Remove cover and continue to cook, stirring until all the liquid has evaporated. Season with **salt and pepper** to taste and add **2 TBSP. red wine vinegar**. Stir well! Enjoy! For a heartier kale dish sauté some bacon and/or mushrooms prior to adding the kale.

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KALE CHIPS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Wash and dry 1 bunch kale. Remove stems and discard thick stems and tear into large pieces. Place kale in a large bowl and massage 1 TBSP. lemon juice, 2 TBSP. coconut oil and 1/4 tsp. sea salt into the kale using your hands. Place on parchment lined baking sheets and bake for 12—15 minutes until kale is crisp but not browned.



GREEN GIFT SMOOTHIE

In a blender, combine **2/3 cup steeped green tea (chilled)**, **1 cup chopped kale**, **1/2 cup broccoli florets**, **1/2 cup green grapes** and **4 sprigs fresh parsley**. Secure lid and blend until smooth.



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