


Kale – what you probably didn't know

This article originally appeared on Dr. Perlmutter's website.

As many of you will note, I have blogged quite a few times about the health virtues of kale. This is truly one on the healthiest food choices you can bring to your table.

Kale, a member of the cabbage family, is power packed with vitamins A, K, C, with meaningful amounts of B vitamins as well as trace minerals. It's low in carbs and calories. 

But there another attribute that I think is important to share in our discussion of kale. Like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, bok choy and cauliflower, kale is a cruciferous vegetable. That means that the flowers of these vegetables take the form of a cross. More importantly, it means that like other cruciferous vegetables, kale is rich in a chemical called sulforaphane, and this may be one of kale's most important health attributes.

Sulforaphane is a sulfur-rich chemical that activates a gene pathway in animals as well as humans called Nrf2, and when Nrf2 is turned on by consuming sulforaphane rich foods, several important health-promoting mechanisms are accentuated. These include a reduction in inflammation, enhanced antioxidant protection, and powerful amplification of our ability to detoxify potential damaging chemicals.

It's certainly compelling to consider the fact that kale and the other cruciferous vegetables are healthful choices well beyond their nutritional content – they actually change the expression of our DNA for the better!

So, next time you're at the farmer's market or health food store, consider this new and empowering information as you put a couple of bunches of kale in your basket.