



## Vitamin A in Foods

Vitamin A from plants (provitamin A) is not the same thing as active/pre-formed vitamin A (**retinol**). In the body, active vitamin A is present as retinol, which is bound to fats. Beta-carotene, the vitamin A precursor found primarily in plants, needs to be converted to active vitamin A (retinol) in order for your body to use it. This happens in the intestines and the liver.

Only a small fraction of the beta-carotene found in plant foods gets converted into active vitamin A, and if someone has poor gut health that conversion is even less effective. This is one reason why I recommend eating some animal sources of active vitamin A, since these are easiest for your body to use.

If you are vegetarian, put butter on the veggies listed below to help activate beta-carotene into usable retinol. If you're vegan, use coconut or olive oil.

## Top 10 Vitamin A Foods

Below is a vitamin A foods list that includes the best dietary sources:

(IU = International Units; DV = daily value)

**Winter/butternut squash** — 1 cup, cooked cubes: 22,869 IU (457 percent DV)

**Sweet potato** — 1 medium, cooked potato: 21,907 IU (438 percent DV)

**Kale** — 1 cup, chopped: 10,302 IU (206 percent DV)

**Carrots** — 1 medium raw carrot: 10,190 IU (204 percent DV)

**Beef Liver** — 1 ounce: 8,881 IU (178 percent DV)

**Spinach** — 1 cup raw: 2,813 IU (56 percent DV)

**Dried apricots** — 1 ounce: 1,009 IU (20 percent DV)

**Broccoli** — 1 cup raw: 567 IU (11 percent DV)

**Butter** — 1 tablespoon: 350 IU (7 percent DV)

**Egg yolks** — 1 large egg: 245 IU (5 percent DV)

Other healthy vitamin A foods include cod liver oil, red bell peppers, raw whole milk (full-fat) and cheeses, mangos, tomatoes, cantaloupe, green peas, papaya, peaches, oatmeal, and spices/herbs like basil and paprika.