A recent Ohio State University study showed that salads eaten with full-fat dressings help with the absorption of another carotenoid called lutein, which is found in green leafy vegetables and has been shown to benefit vision. If you don’t like heavy salad dressing, sprinkle walnuts, pistachios or grated cheese over your greens.

"Vitamin C helps make plant-based iron more absorbable," says nutritionist Stacy Kennedy of the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. It actually converts much of the plant-based iron into a form that’s similar to what is found in fish and red meats. Vitamin C-rich foods, like red bell pepper, can increase the absorption of non-heme iron by six times. Black beans are good sources of iron. Consider black bean tacos topped with sautéed red bell peppers to increase the iron absorption.

Sodium and potassium also work together. Excess sodium interferes with the natural ability of blood vessels to relax and expand, increasing blood pressure—and increasing the chances of having a stroke or heart attack. Potassium encourages the kidneys to excrete sodium, reducing the excess.

Other studied combinations include green tea and black pepper, turmeric and black pepper, whole grains with onions and garlic, tomatoes and olive oil, salmon with collard greens, brussel sprouts and olive oil and kale with almonds. Food synergy can be as easy as preparing a chicken dish that’s made with turmeric and adding a little black pepper or cooking your fish with a little garlic.

Want to know more about food synergy? Check out health.com, rd.com or webmed.com.

Becoming intentional about pairing foods that work together will positively impact your health. Bon appetit!