

Dietitian's Top 15 'Super Foods'



The foods listed below are considered 'super foods' because they are nutritionally dense, packed with phytochemicals, vitamins, minerals and other components that have been linked to reducing chronic disease risk.

- 1. Beans (Legumes):** Loaded with fiber, protein and polyphenols, beans should be a part of any healthy diet. Colorful beans like black beans, pinto beans, broad beans, fava beans and lentils have the highest antioxidant content. Beans also are an excellent source of folate. Try to include beans as a daily part of your diet; they are a great alternative protein source to high fat meats.
- 2. Blueberries (Berries):** Berries in general, including strawberries, cherries, raspberries and goji berries, are considered a 'super food' because they are full of flavonoids, vitamin C and ellagic acid, which studies have shown may inhibit the growth of cancer cells. Blueberries ounce for ounce provide more antioxidants than any other fruit or vegetable.
- 3. Broccoli (Cruciferous Vegetables):** Known as a cruciferous vegetable, it contains the phytochemical sulphoraphane, which has been shown to activate enzymes that may destroy cancer-causing chemicals. It also is a good source of folic acid and vitamin C as well as other antioxidants. Other excellent veggies in the cruciferous family include arugula, Brussels sprouts, watercress and cabbage.
- 4. Dark Chocolate (Antioxidants):** The darker the chocolate, the better it is for you and the less sugar it will contain. Dark chocolate is full of beneficial antioxidants. While it is good news that chocolate is good for you, you shouldn't eat excessive amounts. One ounce per day is enough.
- 5. Oats (Whole Grains):** Oats contain soluble fiber that has been shown to lower your serum cholesterol, in particular LDL cholesterol, and should be incorporated into your daily diet. Whole grains, which include oats, brown rice, barley and many others, should be your first choice over refined grains like white flour and white rice, which lack fiber and the phytochemicals that whole grains contain.
- 6. Olive Oil (Mono-unsaturated fats):** A traditional staple of the Mediterranean diet, olive oil is rich in mono-unsaturated fat, antioxidant polyphenols and vitamin E. Whenever possible use olive oil instead of saturated fats, which include butter, lard and margarine. It may help to lower your risk of heart disease.



- 7. Onion and Garlic (Alliums):** Onions contain allium compounds that have been linked to a reduced risk of some cancers. Red onions in particular are rich in a phytochemical called quercetin, which is a strong antioxidant. They also may help to improve circulation and to regulate blood pressure. The unique flavor of garlic comes from phytochemicals known as allylic sulphides, which act as antioxidants, helping the body ward off cell damage. Studies suggest garlic may help reduce the risk of cancer.
- 8. Oranges (Vitamin C):** Long recognized as a potent source of vitamin C, oranges also are a good source of fiber and folic acid. Vitamin C is required for the production of collagen, which is essential for skin, bone, and teeth health. Fruits rich in Vitamin C include: strawberries, kiwi, citrus fruits and guava. Incorporate at least one serving of vitamin C-rich fruits every day.
- 9. Salmon (Oily Fish):** Like all oily fish, salmon is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, beneficial for enhancing the immune system, heart health, and cancer prevention. Salmon also is a good source of selenium. Try to have one to two 3-ounce servings of fish per week. Fish high in omega-3 include herring, mackerel, trout and sardines.
- 10. Spinach (Dark Leafy Greens):** As a member of the 'dark leafy greens' family, spinach is full of antioxidants, carotene and lutein, which play a role in eye health. Dark leafy greens like spinach, kale, collards, chard, mustard greens and turnip greens are good sources of folate, fiber and B-vitamins.
- 11. Sweet Potatoes (Vitamin A):** Bright orange vegetables, like sweet potatoes, are packed with the carotenoid antioxidants alpha and beta-carotene, as well as vitamin E, which help protect from free radical damage and enhance the immune system. Vitamin A-rich vegetables include: pumpkin, carrots, orange bell peppers, and butternut squash. Cooking these vegetables also helps the body absorb more of the carotenoids, so try to eat both raw and cooked versions for a good balance. Eating half a cup a day of vitamin A-rich vegetables is a good start to a healthy diet.
- 12. Tea (Flavonoids):** Teas made from the plant *Camellia sinensis*, which include green tea, black tea, white tea and oolong tea, are rich in catechin flavonoids, powerful antioxidants, which may help reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease. Brewing the tea for at least three minutes and squeezing the tea bag will increase the flavonoid content of your tea.
- 13. Tomatoes (Lycopene):** The anti-oxidant lycopene is what gives the tomato its beautiful red color. Lycopene also is found in watermelon, guava, red peppers and grapefruit. Research has indicated that eating plenty of lycopene-containing foods, especially cooked tomatoes, may reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer (prostate cancer, in particular, however this is not yet conclusive). Lycopene foods also are a source of vitamin C and E, flavonoids and potassium, which may help regulate blood pressure. Like most vegetables they are a good source of fiber.
- 14. Walnuts (Nuts):** Nuts, including almonds, sunflower seeds, Brazil nuts, pecans, cashews, etc, are excellent sources of vitamin E and omega-3 fatty acids, not to mention a healthy source of protein. Walnuts have the highest content of polyunsaturated fats, which may help reduce LDL (the 'bad') cholesterol and raise HDL (the 'good') cholesterol. Consuming one ounce of nuts per day should be a part of a healthy, balanced diet.
- 15. Yogurt (Pro/Pre-biotics):** Yogurt is considered a 'super food' because of the pro and prebiotics it contains that promote a healthy GI tract and help to support the immune system. Probiotics are the 'healthy bacteria' that populate the GI tract and pre-biotics are the nutrients that the probiotics like to feed on. When selecting yogurt look for low-fat or non-fat varieties. Plain is the best because there is no added sugar.