

Super Foods

What are **Super Foods**? Super Foods are foods that can provide us with protective properties like antioxidants, phytonutrients, and fiber and are packed with lots of vitamins and minerals. These foods may be protective in preventing heart disease, cancers, diabetes, depression, macular degeneration, Alzheimer's and many other conditions.

We should include these in our daily meal plan except for fish which can be eaten two to three times a week to reap the benefits.

Here is a list of some **Super Foods**:

Fruits and Veggies

Especially kale, collard greens, broccoli, carrots, sweet potato, sweet or hot peppers, garlic, onions, bananas, grapes, berries, cantaloupe, watermelon citrus fruits, strawberries. Skip the juice and eat the fruits and veggies that way you get the **fiber** and **phytonutrients**. These foods are packed with lots of **vitamins and minerals** ranging from **vitamin C**, **folic acid**, **calcium**, **selenium**, **chromium**, and more. Some of these foods provide high amounts of **beta carotene** and other **antioxidants**, **phytonutrients**, **flavonoids** and are known for their low fat and low calorie appeal. A portion is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked veggies, 1 cup raw veggies, $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cup of fruit. Strive for 9-13 servings a day

Beans and Lentils

They are low in fat, cholesterol-free, high in both complex **carbohydrates** and **protein**, and provide an excellent source of **soluble fiber** that is essential to help lower cholesterol in the blood. Lentils also contain **insoluble fiber**, which helps to maintain a healthy digestive system and in the fight against some cancers.

These foods are excellent for vegetarians as they have high protein content and are a good source of **calcium**, which also makes them useful to those with a dairy intolerance.

Most supply **iron** and **potassium**, which may be beneficial in reducing blood pressure and maintaining a healthy heart. They are rich in iron but, to help the body absorb the iron from lentils and other beans, they should be eaten with foods that contain a good supply of **vitamin C**. They are also a source of **magnesium**, which helps to release the energy from food, and **vitamin B**. Serving size is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked. These foods can count as part of your 9-13 servings of fruits and veggies

Nuts and Seeds

All nuts contain **protein** making them useful in a vegetarian diet. They are a great source of energy but are high in calories, so eating too many will add to a high calorie diet.

Nuts are high in **unsaturated fat**, which can help towards maintaining a healthy heart in conjunction with a healthy low fat diet. Most nuts, particularly hazelnuts and macadamias, are high in **monounsaturated fat**, while pine nuts and walnuts are high in **polyunsaturated fats**. Chestnuts are really the only low-fat nuts.

If eaten regularly in the diet, nuts are a valuable source of minerals such as **iron**, which makes hemoglobin that helps carry oxygen around the body in blood. Nuts can also contain useful amounts of **magnesium** (especially brazil nuts), which aids the release of energy from foods to assist nerve and muscle function and keep bones healthy. Nuts contain **zinc**, which contributes towards the strengthening of the immune system.

Some nuts, such as almonds, brazil, hazel, peanuts and walnuts, are rich sources of **vitamin E**. Vitamin E is an important antioxidant vitamin linked with the potential prevention of heart disease.

Folic acid is present in peanuts, hazel, cashew and walnuts. Folic acid is part of the B vitamin complex and helps to release energy from food, produce red blood cells and is important in early pregnancy to prevent neural tube defects such as spina bifida.

Brazil nuts, in particular are high in zinc and the antioxidant **selenium**, which may help against heart disease, cancer and ageing. Brazil nuts are one of the best sources of this essential mineral.

Almonds are a good source of the vital minerals zinc, potassium and iron plus some of the B vitamins. To ensure that these minerals are fully absorbed, it is necessary to eat them with foods that contain vitamin C because almonds contain acids that combine with these minerals and remove them from the body. Almonds also contain more calcium than any other nuts.

Flaxseed Its high content of alpha linolenic acids has made the ancient flax seed become our modern miracle food. Alpha linolenic acid is a type of omega 3 fatty acid, similar to those found in fish such as salmon. Benefits of flax seed as shown in many studies include lowering total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol) levels. Other benefits show that flax seed may also help lower blood triglyceride and blood pressure. It may also keep platelets from becoming sticky therefore reducing the chance of a heart attack.

Aside from alpha linolenic acid, flax seed is rich in lignan. Lignan is a type phytoestrogen (antioxidant) and also provides fiber. Researches reveal that lignan in flax seed shows a lot of promise in fighting disease -- including a possible role in cancer prevention especially breast cancer. It is thought that lignan metabolites can bind to estrogen receptors, hence inhibiting the onset of estrogen-stimulated breast cancer.

Flaxseed must be ground to reap the benefits. 1-2 tablespoons per day. Can be sprinkled in yogurt, salads or cereal. It has a nutty flavor.

Peanuts eaten raw or roasted are a very nutritious food, but they become less nutritious when salt or other flavourings are added. Peanuts are rich in protein and minerals such as **zinc, iron** and **magnesium**.

Walnuts can be eaten in a wide variety of ways including fresh or pickled. They contain folic acid and **vitamin E**.

Serving sizes are small -6 almonds or 10 peanuts. Be careful because they can add up to a lot of calories.

Whole Grain

Wholegrain is the term used to describe all cereals (including wheat, oats and barley) that contain the wholegrain — that is the outer bran layer, the starchy center and the germ or seed in the center. It's the combination of all three that make wholegrain so important in the diet.

A diet rich in wholegrain is thought to assist with the lowering of cholesterol and is associated with a reduced risk of heart disease.

The outer bran layer provides valuable **fiber** in the diet to aid digestion and to maintain a healthy digestive system, as well as helping us feel fuller and prevent overeating. Whole grains provide good supplies of carbohydrate and protein and are an important aspect of any healthy diet and particularly in vegetarian diets.

Oats contain **soluble fiber** which is known to help reduce blood cholesterol, blood pressure and the risk of some cancers and should be eaten regularly as part of a low-fat diet. Oats also contain some **polyunsaturated fats** (more than other grains) as well as **carbohydrate, protein and iron**, iron needed for healthy red blood cells; Oats also contain calcium for strong bones and teeth, and **vitamin B**.

Whole wheat is a valuable source of **fiber, iron, magnesium, zinc** and the **B vitamins**. A lot of these nutrients are lost in refining so it is important to choose products that contain the whole wheat. A serving is equal to average size slice of bread, 1/3 cup rice, ½ cup pasta or 80 calories.

Olive oil

Olive oil is one of the main features of the Mediterranean diet, a style of eating recognized for its health-protecting properties and general well being. In comparison to other diets, incidents of heart disease, strokes and cancer are all relatively low.

Olive oil contains high levels of **monounsaturated fats** that help lower blood cholesterol levels, which may in turn help to maintain a healthy heart and prevent strokes.

Olive oil is also an excellent source of **vitamin E** which acts as an antioxidant that protects the cells' membranes as well as thinning the blood and increasing the body's immune system. A serving size is 1 teaspoon.

Avocado

Avocados are packed with nutrients and are a good source of **vitamins, minerals, protein** and starch. They also contain high levels of **monounsaturated fat**, which can help to lower blood cholesterol levels, as part of a healthy low fat diet which is linked to a healthier heart.

This fruit is a very good source of **vitamin E**, an antioxidant that protects cell membranes as well as thinning the blood and boosting the immune system.

Avocados also contain **vitamin B6**. This vitamin is important for a healthy nervous system and can be especially beneficial to women suffering from premenstrual syndrome as it reduces the symptoms.

Avocados are rich in **potassium** a mineral that helps to regulate body fluids and is important for a healthy nervous system. Potassium may be beneficial in reducing high blood pressure, thus

helping to maintain a healthy heart and reducing the risk of a stroke. A serving size is about 1/8 of the avocado or 2 tablespoons.

Oily Fish

As well as being an excellent source of **protein**, oily fish such as tuna, salmon, herring, mackerel and sardines are rich in **omega 3 fats**. These fats are polyunsaturated and are best known for their beneficial effects on reducing and preventing heart disease and strokes when eaten as part of a healthy balanced diet. Regular fish consumption helps our immune system.

Together with a healthy low fat diet, Omega 3 fats reduce inflammation. Oily fish are a good source of **selenium** and **vitamin E**. Selenium and vitamin E both may help against heart disease and ageing.

Canned oily fish including salmon and sardines will also have a reasonable **calcium** level as the bones have been included and the canning process has softened them making them easy to eat. Serving size equals 2-3 ounces. Strive for eating 2-3 servings per week.

Red Wine -

Many studies investigated the benefits of red wine suggested that moderate amount of red wine (one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men) lowers the risk of heart attack for people in middle age by - 30 to 50 percent. It is also suggested that alcohol such as red wine may prevent additional heart attacks if you have already suffered from one. Other studies also indicated that red wine can raise HDL cholesterol (the good cholesterol) and prevent LDL (the bad cholesterol) from forming. Red wine may help prevent blood clots and reduce the blood vessel damage caused by fat deposits.

Tea -

Tea is the most commonly consumed beverage in the world after water. Whether it is black, green or red (oolong) tea, they all contain polyphenols which give tea its antioxidant properties. Antioxidants may help protect our body from free radical damage. Indeed, tea ranks as high as or higher than many fruits and vegetables in the ORAC score, a score which measures antioxidant potential of plant-based foods.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the anti-cancer properties of polyphenols. Some studies indeed suggested that tea's polyphenols may reduce risk of gastric, esophageal and skin cancers if one consumes 4 to 6 cups daily. Other laboratory studies have found that polyphenols help prevent blood clotting and lower cholesterol levels.

Super Foods put together by: Healthfitnessadvisor.com