

# **Healing Foods**

## **Important Information You Need For a Healthier Life**



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## **Introduction**

Do you remember, as a child, being told by your mother to eat all your carrots because they are good for your eyes? Later on in life, you may have been told that this was just an "old wives tale". Guess what, recent studies have shown that Mom was right! Foods can prevent eye disease, heart disease, arthritis and more.

### **Some Basic Science:**

In recent years scientists have discovered that foods contain "phytochemicals", A fancy name for naturally occurring chemicals. This is not the same as nutrients, that we all know are the substances necessary for sustaining life.

Phytochemicals are substances that have properties that can aid in disease prevention and even cures. Scientists have identified thousands of these chemicals in the foods we eat and a single serving of fruits or vegetables can contain as many as one hundred different phytochemicals.

The most commonly known phytochemicals are the antioxidants. Antioxidants protect our cells from damage from toxic substances and from free radicals, a by-product produced by our bodies converting oxygen into energy. Free radicals can damage cells in our bodies and lead to disease. Antioxidants protect the body from oxidation and reduce the risk of acquiring many of our common ailments.

## **Fruits and Vegetables**

In fruits and vegetables you can tell which of the main phytochemicals they contain by their color.

Fruits and vegetables that are orange in color, such as carrots, cantaloupes and mangoes contain beta carotene.

Those that are red in color, such as tomatoes, watermelon, and pink grapefruit contain lycopene.

Yellow fruits and vegetables such as pineapples, oranges, & peaches contain beta cryptoxanthin.

Indoles can be found in the green vegetables, broccoli, cabbage, and kale.

Purple fruits and vegetables such as blueberries, grapes, and eggplant contain anthocyanins.

Allicin can be found in garlic, onions, and chives.

## **Healing Properties of Fruits**

### **Amaranth:**

This is technically a fruit, but can be used as a grain in breads, muffins and other flour based foods.

The seeds are higher in muscle building protein than other grains and are full of immune boosting Magnesium, Copper and Zinc.

### **Apricots:**

A super source of the antioxidants beta carotene and vitamin C. Studies suggest beta carotene may help protect against lung cancer.

Apricots are also full of fiber, and are more nutritious fresh than canned.

### **Bananas:**

This fruit may help lower blood pressure.

The Magic ingredient? Potassium.

Bananas are rich in Vitamin B6, which research at Tufts University found is essential to maintaining a strong immune system.

### **Cantaloupe:**

Brimming with beta carotene and vitamin C, plus fiber, potassium, folate and vitamin B6.

Though studies show that beta carotene's anticancer effect is against lung tumors, it may also protect against oral cancers and cancers of the stomach, cervix and uterus.

The evidence that vitamin C reduces the risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, stomach and pancreas is compelling, says Gladis Block, Ph.D, professor of public health nutrition and epidemiology at the University of California at Berkeley.

## **Figs:**

Figure on getting vitamin C, potassium, magnesium and fiber from figs, fresh or dried.

A recent Harvard School of Public Health study of more than 30,000 men found that only fruit fiber, like that found in figs, was linked to reduced systolic blood pressure (the upper number, which represents pressure during the heart's contractions).

All fiber is associated with reduced diastolic blood pressure (the lower number, which represents the pressure when the heart is at rest between contractions).

## **Grapes:**

All grapes are a great source of boron, a mineral that may help ward off osteoporosis.

Red grape juice is another healthy pick, besides boron, it contains resveratrol, a chemical that could prevent heart disease by inhibiting the clumping of blood cells.

## **Kiwifruit:**

Its fuzzy brown exterior hides a bright green interior chock full of cancer fighting fiber and vitamin C.

Vitamin C may also play a role in the prevention of cataracts.

## **Mango:**

Brimming with beta carotene and vitamin C, the anticancer antioxidants, plus vitamin B6 and copper.

USDA research has found still another health benefit of vitamin C, it helps lower blood pressure.

## **Orange Juice:**

The classic source of vitamin C with a kick, folic acid, which helps prevent birth defects and may protect against cervical cancer.

Other citrus fruits and juices also contain limonoids, substances that

animal studies show can activate detoxifying enzymes in the body, possibly cutting cancer risk.

Smokers may want a double dose of O.J. Their vitamin C requirement is twice that of nonsmokers.

### **Pears:**

A super source of fiber.

In addition to all its other benefits, fiber (when combined with a low fat diet) can lessen the risk of developing polyps in the colon, which may be a precursor to cancer.

Pears also provide some vitamin C, potassium and boron.

### **Prunes:**

The classic source of relief for constipation, because they contain sorbitol (a natural sugar) and lots of fiber.

Prunes are also a bone saving source of boron and of the antioxidant vitamins A and E.

### **Strawberries:**

More vitamin C and fiber than you will find in most fruits, including oranges.

In fact, any berries are an excellent source of fiber.

Strawberries also contain ellagic acid, a natural cancer fighting chemical.

Researchers have found that this compound is a potent inhibitor of such carcinogens as tobacco smoke and nitrosamines.

## **Healing Properties of Vegetables**

### **Broccoli**

Broccoli, "The best prescription"

Broccoli is bursting with the cancer fighting fiber, beta carotene and vitamin C, plus folic acid (which helps prevent neural tube birth defects), bone building calcium and boron.

There's more potassium. (which helps lower blood sugar)  
Researchers have also found in broccoli a hidden cancer fighting chemical, sulforaphane, which stimulates the activity of detoxifying enzymes in the body.

### **Brown Rice:**

It contains a substance called oryzanol, which reduces LDL levels by as much as 20 percent, (the high fiber rice bran found in brown rice may help lower cholesterol too) bonus, brown rice shines in vitamin B6 and magnesium, while also providing thiamine, (important for the functioning of nerves) niacin, copper and zinc.

And it also has vitamin E which, studies show , strengthens the immune system and reduces the risk of heart disease and cataracts.

### **Cabbage:**

An important member of the cruciferous family of cancer fighting vegetables.

It's anticancer key may be the presence of a substance called indoles. Scientists think that one indole in particular may help prevent breast cancer by decreasing the activity of the chemical estradiol, which is a precursor to the hormone estrogen. (estrogen fuels the growth of certain tumors)

### **Carrots:**

Best for their sky high beta carotene content.

A recent study of 87,000 female nurses found that those who eat five



or more servings a week were 68 percent less likely to suffer a stroke than those eating one or fewer carrots a month.

Other studies have suggested that eating one carrot a day may reduce the risk of lung cancer among ex-smokers.

### **Kale:**

Another boon against heart disease, this underappreciated cruciferous vegetable is especially rich in beta carotene and vitamin C, both of which may reduce the harmful effects of LDL cholesterol.

Kale is also packed with fiber, vitamin B6, calcium, copper, manganese and potassium.

### **Pumpkin:**

This fall favorite is very high in carotene content, just like its winter squash cousins, butternut and hubbard.

All are fiber rich too.

Harvard researchers recently found that women who ate of fruits and vegetables high in carotenes including beta carotene had a 39 percent lower risk of cataracts requiring surgery than women who had the lowest carotene intake.

Winter squash was one of the strongest protectors.

### **Red Bell Peppers:**

A better anticancer pick than green peppers because they contain extra carotenes.

They also supply more potassium and vitamin C which, aside from its antioxidant properties, also helps fight cancer by inhibiting the formation in your body of carcinogenic nitrosamines. (nitrosamines form when you eat foods containing nitrites, such as bacon.)

### **Spinach:**

A powerhouse of antioxidants and virtually every nutrient you can think of.

It is a particularly rich source of folic acid, which may not only reduce the risk of neural tube birth defects but also protect against cervical dysplasia, a condition that precedes cervical cancer.

Another benefit, the Ongoing Harvard Nurse's Health Study found that women who ate spinach daily were 43 percent less likely to suffer a stroke than those who ate spinach once a month or less.

### **Sweet Potatoes:**

These pack almost twice as much fiber and significantly more beta carotene than white or red potatoes.

In the Harvard Nurse's Health Study, women who took 15 to 20 milligrams of beta carotene a day (1/2 cup of mashed sweet potatoes has 13 milligrams) had a 39 percent lower risk for heart attack than women who consumed less than 6 milligrams of beta carotene a day.

### **Tomatoes:**

Contain lycopene, a chemical also found in red grapefruit, which is thought to help prevent some cancers.

Tomatoes also supply respectable amounts of vitamin A and C, as well as fiber and potassium.

## **Seeds, Nuts, Oils and Fish**

There are healthy fats as well as unhealthy fats. The healthy fats are monounsaturated fatty acids, which can be found in vegetable oils, seeds, nuts and some plants and omega-3 fatty acids which are found mostly in the deep water fatty fish. Monounsaturated fatty acids are known to play a beneficial role in a healthy heart and other chronic illnesses. Omega-3 fatty acids are a natural anti-inflammatory and can be helpful in the treatment of other illnesses as well.

The research has shown that including monounsaturated fatty acids in your diet can help prevent and treat heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity, inflammatory conditions and musculo-skeletal pain.

Some fish are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids which are helpful in the prevention and treatment of inflammation, mental health disorders, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, digestive disorders, autoimmune disease, and cancer

And if that weren't enough, small amounts of healthy fats help the body absorb nutrients from vegetables and fruits.

## **Healing Properties of Seeds, Nuts, Oils and Fish**

### **Sunflower Seeds:**

Similar to nuts in polyunsaturated fat content, but with much more vitamin E the antioxidant that fights cancer, heart disease and cataracts.

Most recently, a large study of over 279,000 male and female health workers found that with the highest daily intake of vitamin E cut the risk of heart disease by about 40 percent.

An intake of at least 100 IU a day was shown to have the greatest benefit. (the RDA is currently 15 IU)

### **Fish:**

The omega 3 fatty acids in fish oils are the fix for lowering blood fats especially triglycerides (high levels of which are thought to be more harmful to women than men).

They also help in reducing blood pressure and may even ease arthritis symptoms.

Mackerel, lake trout, herring, anchovies, blue fish, salmon and sardines have the most fatty acids, eat fish two or three times a week. and you're covered. (do not take fish oil supplements except on the advice of your doctor)

### **Nuts:**

They are a surprising help for your heart.

A study at Loma Linda University in California found that adults on a low fat diet who ate 2 ounces of walnuts five or more times a week lowered their total cholesterol levels by 12 percent.

A controlled group followed the same diet, minus the nuts, and showed just 6 percent drop.

Apparently replacing saturated fat in your diet with polyunsaturated fat in nuts pays off.

Nuts listed in order of the highest to lowest in monounsaturated fatty

acids:

Macadamias

Hazelnuts

Pecans

Almonds

Cashews

Pistachios

Brazil nuts

Peanuts

Pine nuts

Walnuts

### **Olive Oil:**

A key component of the healthy Mediterranean diet.

It is the oil richest in monounsaturated fats, which lower blood cholesterol.

If you don't like olive oil, try canola oil, it is almost as high in monounsaturates, with even less saturated fat. Other oil sources of monounsaturated fats are Peanut oil, Sesame oil, Walnut oil, Soybean oil, Flaxseed oil and Grape seed oil.

A recent study found that you can cut LDL cholesterol by 7 to 10 percent if you substitute olive or canola oil for margarine even more if you're replacing butter.

But do not go overboard on any oil, they all contain 14 grams of fat and 120 calories per tablespoon.

### **Flaxseed Oil:**

Flaxseed oil comes from flax and is an oilseed. It is a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids and also contains lignans. Research has shown that a diet that contains lignans can reduce the risk of several types of cancer as well as heart disease and osteoporosis

## Grains

Grains are the seeds of plants. Whole grains contain all parts of the grain, including the bran, endosperm and germ.

**Bran.** Forming the outer layer of the seed, the bran is a rich source of niacin, thiamine, riboflavin, magnesium, phosphorus, iron and zinc. The bran also contains the majority of the seed's fiber.

**Germ.** A concentrated source of niacin, thiamine, riboflavin, vitamin E, magnesium, phosphorus, iron and zinc. The germ also contains protein and fat.

A rich source of fiber and naturally low in fat

An important source of vitamins and minerals, such as B vitamins, Vitamin E, folate, selenium, zinc and iron

They contain a variety of phytochemicals and antioxidants

They help form the foundation of healthy eating

There is a wide variety to choose from

Tend to have a low glycemic index, which helps to regulate blood sugar levels

Associated with reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, constipation, obesity, heart disease and cancer

## **Healing Properties of Grains**

### **Barley:**

It's brimming with beta glutens, a type of fiber that can lower your risk of heart disease by reducing levels of artery clogging LDL. (low density lipoprotein)

Hulled, waxy varieties (found in health food stores) contain the most beta glucans, but any barley is a good source.

Look for the term "unpearled" on the box; this means the barley is unprocessed and higher in fiber. (all fibers help lower blood pressure)

### **Bran Cereal:**

Pick one high in wheat bran, there's no better source of cancer fighting insoluble fiber, the kind that increases stool bulk and speed.

(Scientists think that faster the toxins move through your bowels, the lower your risk of colorectal cancer.)

Look for a cereal that provides at least 5 grams of fiber per serving.

### **Oats:**

A good choice for lowering LDL cholesterol.

Most recently, an analysis of 10 studies found that eating 3 grams of soluble fiber a day, the amount in a large bowl of 100 percent oat bran cereal, or three packets of instant oatmeal can cut LDL cholesterol by at least 5.6 percent in six weeks.

### **Whole Wheat Bread:**

Whole wheat bread flour and bread contain triple the fiber found in white bread.

It is also richer in vitamin B6 and magnesium.

According to Simm Meydani, Ph.D professor of nutrition at Tufts University in Boston, we need extra B6 as we age to keep our immune

system strong.

Any whole wheat foods, including pasta, provide protection.

### **Wheat Germ:**

Top notch for almost any nutrient.

Just a quarter cup packs in 5 grams of fiber, as well as almost all the B vitamins, iron, magnesium and zinc.

It is incredibly rich in manganese too and is one of the best sources of vitamin E (other than oils) and chromium.

Many Americans get too little chromium, a mineral that helps regulate blood sugar levels.



## **Beans and Lentils**

Beans and lentils are an excellent source of protein and fiber. They are also a low fat food. They are rich in phytochemicals and antioxidants. Research has shown that they can help prevent and treat a wide variety of chronic diseases such as, inflammatory diseases, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, depression, obesity, cancer and strokes.

### **Healing Properties of Beans and Lentils**

#### **Black Beans:**

A bonanza of soluble fiber, the kind that helps lower LDL (by as much as 24 percent) and reduce blood pressure.

The fiber also helps keep sugar levels on an even keel, staving off hunger, even reducing the need for insulin among diabetics.

Of course, other beans and peas are full of fiber too. Below is a list of the most common types.

- Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)
- Lima beans
- Fava beans
- Black-eyed peas
- Kidney beans
- Navy beans
- Great northern beans
- Pinto beans

#### **Lentils:**

A powerhouse of nutrients mostly B vitamins, which recent research from the ongoing Physicians Health Study, suggest it may help protect against heart attacks.

Lentils are also high in fiber, protein and minerals such as iron and immune boosters copper, manganese and zinc.

#### **Miso:**

This soybean paste (used to season soups and sauces) contains

isoflavones, substances that may protect against breast cancer by inhibiting the growth of blood vessels that fuel solid tumors.

Tofu or soybean curd, is also rich in iron and calcium (when processed with calcium salts).

Another soy product, tempeh, also provides vitamins A and B6, magnesium and zinc with less fat than tofu.

Other soy products include:

Soy milk, Soy Beverages

Soynuts

Soy Yogurt

Tofu & Tofu Products

## **Spices and Herbs**

Spices and herbs can be helpful in treating many medical conditions such as, nausea, infections, inflammatory conditions, autoimmune disorders, high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels.

### **Healing Properties of Herbs and Spices**

#### **Garlic:**

It is not just folklore, research suggests garlic helps protect against heart disease and stroke.

It may also lower blood pressure, and test tube studies show it even acts as a antibiotic.

Best of all, garlic contains substances that appear to detoxify carcinogens.

A member of the allium family, which includes onions and scallions, garlic has been linked to lower stomach cancer rates in China and Italy.

#### **Ginger:**

This spice may be a natural diet aid, possibly boosting the rate in which the body burns calories, according to Australian researchers.

Ginger, with other spices including oregano, pepper, rosemary and thyme is a natural antioxidant.

#### **Turmeric:**

This yellow spice which is most familiar in Indian cooking and American prepared mustard is an excellent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent.

Turmeric can help alleviate the symptoms of autoimmune disorders, arthritis, tendonitis, and other disorders with inflammation

**Fresh or Dried Peppermint:**

Peppermint is excellent as a remedy for all types of stomach upset such as, indigestion, nausea and heartburn.

**Cayenne Pepper:**

Cayenne pepper has a variety of uses. It can be used to ease toothache pain, reduce the tendency of blood to clot, decrease cholesterol, improve circulation and prevent heart disease.

## Healing Teas

Studies from all over the world describe the chemicals contained in tea that may prevent cancer as well as lower blood cholesterol.

Most research, however, has been on green tea, popular in China. (and found in specialty shops here)

Some evidence suggests similar benefits from oolong tea, which hasn't been studied much but may offer some protection.

Tea contains a large amount of antioxidants called polyphenols. This antioxidant has been shown to have many benefits including the ability to:

- Protect against strokes
- Inhibit the growth of cancer cells
- Reduce high blood pressure
- Improve blood flow to the heart
- Reducing cholesterol
- Reducing the risk of osteoporosis
- Alleviating the inflammation from arthritis
- Improving the bodies ability to fight infections and diseases

The green and white teas are the least processed and have higher levels of the polyphenols than the black teas.

## Other Healing Foods

### Chocolate:

Yes, chocolate can be good for you, but it has to be the dark chocolate, not milk chocolate. Milk will bind to the antioxidants in the chocolate and make them unavailable to your body. For this same reason, you also do not want to drink milk when eating dark chocolate.

Chocolate contains procyanidins & epicatechins. These are flavonoids that are part of a group of antioxidants called polyphenols. Below are the beneficial effects of eating a small amount of dark chocolate each day.

Decreases bad cholesterol

Inhibits the formation of blood clots

Increases blood flow through the arteries

Elevates mood and pleasure by causing an increase in serotonin and endorphin levels in the brain

### Yogurt:

The ultimate health food, yogurt, may prevent allergic attacks, say researchers at the University of California, Davis.

They found people who ate two 8 ounce cartons of yogurt with live cultures (specifically lactobacillus bulgaricus and streptococcus thermophilus) per day came down with fewer colds and almost 10 times fewer allergy symptoms than those eating the same amount of yogurt with killed cultures.

Other research found that women with recurrent yeast infections had almost seven times fewer infections when they ate yogurt containing live cultures. (in this case, lactobacillus acidophilus).

Of course, yogurt is also a substitute source of bone building calcium.