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Top 25 SUPERFOODS *for Optimal Health!*



We LOVE plant-based Superfoods!! They are the ultimate nutrition multi-taskers! Superfoods are far more than just vitamin and mineral supplements—their whole is much greater than the sum of their parts. They are foods that provide health benefits far beyond their recognized nutritional value. Super foods are foods with high concentrations of phytochemicals, antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and co-factors. Since super foods are nutritious whole foods, they help us to embrace our health, instead of thinking along the lines of nutrient splitting, or fighting disease. Implementing these super foods into your diet will allow you to reap all of the benefits these yummy foods and herbs.

We believe that these foods are the best foods for our bodies when consumed together, throughout the day, *every day!* It's all about eating a diverse assortment of whole foods. In all of our published nutrition books we take these antioxidant-rich superfoods a step further and add them to delicious, healthy recipes for you to cook at home. Want to learn how to incorporate more of these foods? Simply **take a book tour here** and get started today!

We hope that you enjoy this incredible *Must Have* superfood list as much as we do!

1. Broccoli



A cruciferous veggie, broccoli is one of the most nutrient-dense foods known, and at a very low caloric cost. Not only is broccoli an amazing cancer-fighter, it also boosts the immune system, lowers the incidence of cataracts, supports cardiovascular health, builds bones and fights birth defects. It's high in polyphenols, which have antioxidant characteristics, and is in the *top ten most commonly eaten veggies* in the U.S.

Common Question: What's that horrible smell that is sometimes there when opening packaged broccoli, or cooking it? The not-so-appealing smell is from sulfur compounds being released from the broccoli. These sulfur compounds are protective to the plant and to us as consumers, and are a big reason that broccoli has such cancer-fighting and preventing properties. The smell becomes stronger when broccoli is packaged/contained for more than a couple days. The best way to minimize the smell is to purchase super fresh broccoli, perhaps from a farmer's market instead of the grocery store, and to consume it sooner than later.

Other cruciferous veggies: kale, cabbage, Chinese broccoli, Brussels sprout, cauliflower, bok choy, turnip root and greens, mustard seeds and greens, radish, horseradish, watercress.

2. Spinach



Spinach is a mild-tasting green that boasts *amazing nutritional content*. It's a great source of dietary fiber, protein, vitamins A, C, E, K, B6, thiamin, riboflavin, folate, calcium, iron magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, copper and manganese. It's especially famous for its iron and calcium, although there's controversy as to how well these valuable nutrients are absorbed by the body. The iron found in spinach can be more easily absorbed by the body when eaten with vitamin C and calcium. And while spinach is also a good source of calcium, the body also needs vitamin D and magnesium to properly absorb the calcium. But don't get overwhelmed or confused trying to figure out which nutrients need the help of which other nutrients! Instead remember that the properties of these foods all work together, and shouldn't be isolated in one form or another. Remember the big picture of eating a variety of whole foods, and you will easily consume all the necessary nutrients to make all the others workable and absorbable.

Healthful Hint: One of the best ways to get spinach into your diet is by adding it to green smoothies. Check out my *Green Smoothie For Newbies* Recipe [here](#).

3. Sweet potatoes



Sweet potatoes are a great example of a *sweet health food* that is low in sodium and high in dietary fiber, vitamin B6, A, C, potassium and manganese. Some varieties look, cook and taste like white potatoes, while others are more orange in color, and their flesh is moister and sweeter than white potatoes. All varieties of sweet potatoes have significantly more nutritional value than white potatoes. The more orange the flesh of the sweet potato, the higher the content of beta-carotene, termed a provitamin because it can be converted to active vitamin A. Vitamin A is important in several biological functions, and deficiency of it can lead to abnormal bone development and disorders of the reproductive system and of the eyes.

Common Question: What's the difference between sweet potatoes and yams? While the names are often used interchangeably, sweet potatoes and yams are very different vegetables. Sweet potatoes are more common in the U.S. than yams, and the sweeter, orange-flesh varieties are what often get mistaken for yams. Generally U.S. sweet potatoes are moist and sweet. Yams, on the other hand, are popular in Latin America and Caribbean, and are more dry and starchy than sweet potatoes.

4. Walnuts



These *heart-healthy* nuts are great sources of copper and manganese, and most importantly, alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an Omega-3 fatty acid. A handful of these tasty nuts can provide 2.5 grams of ALA, which has been shown to provide many health benefits, including but not limited to cardiovascular protection, improved cognitive function, and anti-inflammatory properties.

Every vegetarian should integrate walnuts into their daily food routines, as they are an amazing plant source of Omega-3 fatty acids. (*Many other sources of Omega-3's are not vegetarian.*)

5. Oranges



Delicious and nutritious, oranges are a good source of thiamin, folate and potassium, and a very good source of dietary fiber and vitamin C. The vitamin C helps with maintenance and protection of healthy bones. Their beta-carotene protects cells from damage, their magnesium helps keeps blood pressure in check, their folic acid helps with proper brain development, their potassium helps maintain electrolyte balance, as well as a healthy cardiovascular system. Eating oranges has been shown to help reduce mucus, maintain dental health and balance LDL-HDL ratios.

6. Berries



In general, berries are potent antioxidants and are especially protective against esophageal and colon cancers. They tend to be high in vitamin C, and can also contribute calcium, magnesium, folate and potassium. Not only do they taste great, but the pretty colors of berries also contribute to their Super Food status. Berries contain phytochemicals and flavonoids that have been shown to be protective against some forms of cancer. Cranberries and blueberries in particular are helpful in preventing bladder infections. Blueberries and raspberries also contain lutein, which is important for healthy vision.

Common varieties: blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, cranberries, and red and purple grapes.

7. Oats



Oatmeal and oat bran are chock full of dietary fiber, protein, vitamins and minerals, and provide countless health benefits. Oats have a positive impact on lowering bad cholesterol, balancing blood sugar by avoiding glucose spikes, reducing risk of breast cancer, lowering blood pressure, regulating bowel function, and improving athletic performance and overall health and longevity. It is the *unique balance* of soluble and insoluble fiber found in oats, along with a balance of carbohydrates and proteins, vitamins and minerals, that make oats a near-perfect food.

Healthful Hint: Combine your super foods! A hearty breakfast of oatmeal topped with cinnamon, walnuts and berries is a sure fire way to boost your antioxidants and start your day with *amazing energy* and nutritional support.

8. Tomatoes



Tomatoes are an amazing source of antioxidants, and boast a vital cancer-fighting phytonutrient called lycopene. It's lycopene that gives tomatoes their red color, and it is this phytonutrient that has contributed to tomatoes' amazing anti-carcinogen properties. Research indicates that the evidence for benefit is strongest for prostate, lung and stomach cancers. Cooking tomatoes breaks down cell walls, releasing and concentrating the lycopene. Tomatoes are a good source of vitamins E and B6, thiamin, niacin, folate, magnesium, phosphorus and copper, and a very good source of dietary fiber, vitamins A, C, K, potassium and manganese.

Healthful Hint: Eating tomatoes with a small amount of fat enables lycopene to be better absorbed by the body. Try pairing tomatoes with fresh mozzarella cheese and drizzling with balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, black pepper and sea salt. *Delicious and nutritious!*



9. Matcha Green Tea

While not technically a food, matcha green tea still makes the Top 25 because of its amazing antioxidant and overall *health-promoting* capacity! The properties within matcha stop cancerous cells in every stage of development, and protect DNA by speeding carcinogen removing, making it a brutal cancer-fighter. It also promotes proper liver function and detoxification, lowers cholesterol, burns fat, prevents diabetes and stroke, and staves off dementia. The unique antioxidants in matcha, called catechins, are so concentrated because of matcha's minimal processing, and attack dreaded free radicals.

Healthful Hint: Want great recipes for incorporating matcha? Check out our **newest book here.**

Fun Fact: The Japanese culture consumes a ton of matcha green tea—10 cups a day, on average!

10. Turmeric



This amazing Indian spice's original use as a dye got trumped when people realized what healing capacities it held. It has been documented as preventing and/or stopping the growth or spread of many different types of cancer, including prostate cancer, metastatic carcinoma, melanoma, leukemia, pancreatic cancer and multiple myeloma. It is a natural anti-septic, anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, liver detoxifier and painkiller. It may decrease the progression of Alzheimer's and Multiple Sclerosis, may aid in fat metabolism and weight management, and is used in Chinese medicine to help with depression. *It's a wonder spice!*

Healthful Hint: Not sure how to use turmeric in cooking? Aside from being a key component in Indian dishes, you can easily spice up your egg salad or steamed cauliflower with turmeric. See our recipe guide for more ideas!

11. Garlic



While some of the research is controversial, garlic has been purported to be anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal. It is noted to positively impact atherosclerosis, cholesterol levels, blood pressure, cancer, platelet aggregation, and hyperlipidemia. It can be useful in preventing and fighting the common cold, and can help regulate blood sugar levels, and preventing some complications of Diabetes Mellitus. Garlic is high in sulfur, which supports the liver, detoxification and the immune system. It helps to feed the good bacteria in our bodies, and kills the bad bacteria.

Healthful Hint: Garlic has most antioxidant benefit when it is crushed or chopped, and allowed to sit for a few minutes before being consumed or added to recipes.

12. Mushrooms



Mushrooms are an excellent *source of minerals* potassium and selenium. Potassium helps to lower blood pressure and the risk of stroke, and selenium stimulates the formation of antibodies and helps protect normal cell function by supporting the body's natural defenses, and by scavenging free radicals.

The most commonly consumed mushroom in the U.S., the white button mushroom, has been shown to have chemoprotective properties, reducing the risk of breast and prostate cancers. Shiitake mushrooms lower cholesterol and triglycerides, while reishi mushrooms support the immune system and adrenals, and maitake mushrooms are the most studied for cancer treatment, and protect healthy cells as they divide.

13. Pumpkin



This big, orange fruit is much more nutrient-dense than pumpkin pie lets on! It's filled with pro-vitamins alpha and beta-carotene that get converted into vitamin A in the body, which promotes healthy vision and immune function. Carotenoids in general boost immunity and decrease the risk of heart disease. Specifically, beta-carotene may also be anti-inflammatory and help reduce skin damage caused by the sun, while alpha-carotene is thought to slow the aging process, reduce the risk of cataracts, and prevent tumor growth.

Pumpkin also has great dietary fiber, antioxidant vitamins C and E (fight free radicals), minerals potassium (lowers blood pressure and risk of stroke) and magnesium (lowers risk of heart disease, assists in calcium absorption and helps maintain proper muscle function), and pantothenic acid (also known as vitamin B5, which is necessary for many biological processes, but most notably for healthy skin and hair).

14. Ginger



This versatile herb root holds many a *healing property*! It is anti-viral, anti-fungal, anti-toxic, which help it to prevent and treat the common cold, is anti-spasmodic, which allows it to relieve gas and bloating, is a natural anti-histamine, which eases allergies, is anti-inflammatory, which decreases pain, and eases nausea induced by seasickness, morning sickness and motion sickness, even that induced by chemotherapy. It eases coughs and scratchy throats by stimulating the secretion of mucous, which also helps to protect against the development of ulcers. It has been proven to lower cholesterol and help prevent the formation of blood clots, which is key healthy heart function.

Fun Fact: Ginger contains special enzymes that catalyze the proteins in your food, aiding in digestion. While it is also a great palate cleanser, perhaps this is why ginger is always served with sushi!

15. Grapes



Crisp and crunchy grapes pack a lot of punch with their vast array of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. In addition to vitamins A and C, grapes boast vitamin B6 (*known to help morning sickness, Parkinson's, heart disease and autism*) and folate (*most notable for its role in helping/preventing heart disease, stroke and cancer, but also known for helping with obesity, depression, schizophrenia, rheumatoid arthritis, fertility, kidney disease, macular degeneration, bone health and menopause*). Grapes also contain the essential minerals potassium, calcium, iron, phosphorus, magnesium and selenium. This rockin' combination of vitamins and minerals work together to help grapes improve and/or prevent the following: asthma, heart disease, migraine, constipation, indigestion, fatigue, kidney disorders, Alzheimer's, breast cancer, macular degeneration, cataracts, cholesterol, and bacterial and viral infections.

Healthful Hint: Store some grapes in the freezer for a frozen sweet treat!

16. Apples



Does an apple a day really keep the doctor away? It appears so, with all of the amazing health benefits that this tasty fruit packs! A good source of dietary fiber and vitamin C, apples also contain antioxidant flavonoids, which have been shown to help prevent and treat a variety of conditions. One flavonoid, phloridzin, is found only in apples, and may increase bone density and help prevent osteoporosis in post-menopausal women. Apples also contain boron, which helps strengthen bones. Quercetin, another flavonoid, has been shown to protect brain cells from the free radical damage that leads to Alzheimer's. The pectin in apples is thought to lower bad (LDL) cholesterol and help with diabetes management. The flavonoids and other properties found in apple have been shown to be instrumental in the prevention of lung, breast, colon and liver cancers.

Healthful Hint: Don't peel your apples! Eat the skin, too, and don't cheat by just *drinking apple juice!* In this case, you get more bang for your buck by eating the whole fruit versus drinking the juice.

17. Beans



Different types of beans boast individual benefits; but overall, all types of beans are great sources of protein and soluble fiber, and are low in fat. Soluble fiber helps lower cholesterol because as the fiber passes through the digestive tract, it traps bile that contains cholesterol, before it can be absorbed by the body. Soluble fiber also helps create more insulin receptor site, a key reason why eating beans can help those suffering from diabetes. Compounds found in beans have been shown to keep normal cells from turning cancerous, and have been thought to help prevent prostate and breast cancers. Beans also contain essential vitamins and minerals folate (*aka vitamin B9, most notable for helping/preventing heart disease, stroke and cancer*) and potassium (*lowers blood pressure and risk of stroke*).

Common Question: What's up with the gas that beans seem to cause? Dry beans are seeds, which are really difficult for our bodies to break down and digest, which means the digestive tract works harder to do so, creating gas. However, as long as beans are soaked and prepared properly, they are plenty digestible, and the gas associated with eating them will decrease. Canned beans are often not soaked long enough, resulting in more gas. Your best option? Buy dry beans, cover them with water and soak them for 12 hours, rinse them, cover them again with water and soak them for another 12 hours, then rinse and cook them. This longer soaking period will soften them up appropriately so that they're easily digestible.

Quick Tip: No time to soak dry beans? Opt for lentils! They don't require soaking, and can be properly cooked in 20 minutes.

18. Avocado



Chock full of folate, glutathione, lutein, vitamin E and heart-healthy fats, avocados are not just *delicious*, but *amazingly nutritious!* Research shows that diets rich in folate help to prevent heart disease and stroke, and glutathione is a very important antioxidant that prevents heart disease and cancer, and helps with the aging process. Lutein is a carotenoid not found in many fruits, and helps maintain eye health by protecting against macular degeneration and cataracts. Avocados are the best fruit source of vitamin E, which helps maintain overall health by protecting against many disease processes. They also have high levels of oleic acid, the heart-healthy mono-unsaturated fat found in olive oil, which has been shown prevent cancer. Other compounds in avocados have been shown to help prevent oral and prostate cancers, and one in particular, beta-sitosterol, has been shown to lower cholesterol.

Healthful Hint: Avocados help your body absorb other nutrients when eaten together, so throw some avocado on your next veggie salad!

19. Coconut



If we were to write a list of SUPER Super Foods, coconut would be on the list! While coconut itself is quite nutritious and full of fiber, it is the coconut oil that really holds *the magic of this food*. Once thought unhealthy because its high fat content, researchers have uncovered that its chemical make-up actually makes it one of the healthiest fats available for consumption. Coconut oil is a medium chain fatty acid (MCFA), as compared to most fats consumed, which are long chain fatty acids (LCFA). These two types of fats are metabolized very differently within the body, and MCFA's actually help to lower bad cholesterol and protect against atherosclerosis and heart disease. MCFA's are also metabolized quickly by your body, so you'll use them for fuel, instead of storing them as fat. Coconut oil is actually the world's only low-calorie fat! Coconut oil is also a very stable oil, meaning that it doesn't hydrogenate, or become a trans fat, when cooking at high temperatures.

Coconut and coconut oil are anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-parasitic, and has been shown to help with countless different types of viral, bacterial, fungal and parasitic infections. It improves digestion, bowel function and absorption of vitamins and minerals, improves insulin secretion and blood glucose utilization, relieves stress on the pancreas and enzyme systems of the body, reduces inflammation, supports immune function, protects against breast, colon and other cancers, and actually tastes good, too!

Healthful Hint: It's easy to incorporate the use of coconut oil—use it to stir fry veggies, spread on toast, cook eggs—you can use it just about anywhere you would typically use butter or olive oil!

20. Kale



A member of the cruciferous veggie family, *mild and earthy-tasting kale* packs extreme nutrition into its leaves. Abundant in fiber, calcium, iron, vitamins A, C and K, kale has seven times the beta-carotene and ten times the lutein of broccoli. (*Remember, Carotenoids help boost immunity and reduce the risk of heart disease, and these specifically help skin damaged skin and eye health, respectively.*) It also has phytochemical compounds, that are released when the kale is chopped or chewed, that have been shown in epidemiological studies to reduce the risk of many types of cancers.

Healthful Hint: Be careful when consuming raw kale—it can be difficult to digest if it's not broken up and chewed properly. Use it in cooking recipes anywhere you would use spinach, or throw it raw into a green smoothie.

21. Cacao



What, chocolate can be good for you?! *Absolutely!* Chocolate and cocoa are filled with flavonoids, which are plant pigments that act as antioxidants to counteract cell damage that leads to chronic disease. Cocoa powder has been shown to lower blood pressure and improve blood flow. Phenylethylamine is a compound found in cocoa that acts as a releasing agent of norepinephrine and dopamine, which help to elevate one's mood.

Caution must be exerted, however, in choosing which chocolate and cocoa products to consume because many are highly processed and contain harmful additives. Stick with dark chocolate and unprocessed cocoa powder and you'll benefit from the positives of this super food!

22. Pomegranate



This beautiful fruit and its juice are full of antioxidant flavenoids that counteract cancer-causing free radicals and help support normal blood flow to the heart, helping to avoid heart disease and stroke. It is a good source of vitamins A, C, and E, and the mineral folate. It helps maintain clear, youthful skin by keeping blood platelets together. The combination of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals makes it a prime candidate to assist in preventing many types of cancer and heart disease, as well as helping with numerous chronic and degenerative conditions.

Healthful Hint: This is one scenario where the juice packs more punch than the fruit! You would have to eat a ton of pomegranates to gain the benefit that a glass of juice gives. Just be sure that your pomegranate juice is not from concentrate, and that it does not contain additional sugar or other fillers.

23. Cinnamon



Adding this warm and comforting spice to your life is an easy way to boost nutritional value! Cinnamon is a good source of manganese, fiber, iron and calcium. It has been shown to help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol, regulate blood sugar, reduce proliferation of leukemia and lymphoma cells, and reduce pain. It has an anti-clotting effect on blood, inhibits bacterial growth and food spoilage, and fights E. coli. It has been shown to increase sex drive over time and in women, reduce urinary tract infections. Smelling cinnamon boosts cognitive function and memory. *And it's delicious!*

Healthful Hint: Here are some easy ways to add cinnamon to your life: stir into your coffee, tea or hot chocolate, sprinkle on toast or oatmeal, spice up yogurt or cottage cheese, season savory dishes by adding to bbq sauces, spice rubs and marinades.

24. Brussels sprouts



Yet another member of the cruciferous veggie family, these tiny cabbage buds differ from their family members by packing a ton of protein, accounting for more than a quarter of their calories. This protein feature means they are a staple for vegetarian diets, where meat protein is omitted. Brussels sprouts are also good sources of vitamins A and C, and minerals folate, potassium and calcium. Brussels sprouts have been shown to help protect the DNA within white blood cells, and are the highest of all cruciferous veggies in glucosinolate, a phytonutrient that is the starting point of many cancer-fighting biochemical processes. Brussels sprouts have also been shown to positively impact on thyroid function.

Healthful Hint: Steaming Brussels sprouts allows them to have even more cholesterol lowering and digestive health improving benefits than in their raw form! *Extra hit:* try steaming with a little coconut oil—deliciously nutritious!

25. Kiwi



The many flavenoids, vitamins and minerals make kiwis an excellent source of antioxidants and overall nutrition. Kiwis have shown to be particularly helpful with respiratory problems in children, notably decreasing symptoms of asthma, shortness of breath, night-time coughing, wheezing, chronic coughing, and runny nose. It's important to note that these results are not traceable to just the content of vitamin C or potassium, but to substances which are still largely unknown, but are contained within kiwi fruit. (*Once again, whole foods are greater than the sum of their parts!*) This combination of nutrition in kiwis helps protect DNA from mutations, and their high fiber content helps prevent colon cancer.