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## Super foods

### Supercharged delicious ingredients

A healthy approach to eating should include a mostly plant-based diet that features:

- fruits
- vegetables
- whole grains
- fish
- beans
- lentils
- nuts

The following are some super stars. Try to include several of them in your diet each day.

#### Beans

Pinto, black, chickpea, and all their cousins — beans offer much more than meets the eye. They're a low-fat source of protein, high in fiber, and provide iron and other minerals. Some, such as kidney beans, are even high in antioxidants. Adding beans to a salad turns a healthy side dish into a filling meal.



#### Blueberries

The intense color of blueberries is more than just pretty to look at. That deep blue comes from the phytochemicals that give fruits and vegetables their color. Research also suggests phytochemicals may reduce your risk of heart disease and certain cancers. Blueberries are also loaded with antioxidants, vitamin C, and potassium. A handful is delicious on its own, or try mixing them with grapes and strawberries in a fruit salad.

#### Broccoli

When it comes to health benefits, it's hard to beat broccoli. It's full of vitamins, fiber, and calcium, and what's more, it provides compounds that seem to offer extra protection against disease. Recent studies highlight broccoli as particularly potent in decreasing the risk of colon cancer, cataracts, and stroke. Enjoy broccoli fresh, steamed, or sautéed.

#### Flax seeds

Flax contains omega-3 fatty acids, a type of polyunsaturated fat that may reduce the risk of heart disease, help with brain function, and more. Flax seeds are also loaded with fiber and help relieve

constipation. To get the health benefits of omega-3s, you can sprinkle ground flaxseeds on cereal or yogurt, bake it into breads, or mix it into smoothies. Drizzle flaxseed oil onto your favorite salads to add a light, nutty flavor.

### **Hot peppers**

Peppers are high in vitamin C and contain capsaicin, the substance that gives them their spicy kick. The concentration is highest in chili peppers, which add lots of flavor to your meals with very little calories. As an added bonus, studies suggest that capsaicin can reduce headaches and inflammation, assist with gastric function, and may even increase metabolism.

### **Nuts**

Nuts get a bad rap for being high in calories, but they're also high in heart-healthy fats and protein. In fact, studies show that many people who eat nuts have a lower risk of heart disease than those who don't. In moderation, nuts are a great addition to salads and rice dishes, and a handful of nuts is an excellent snack to keep your hunger in check throughout the day.

### **Salmon**

Salmon is a great source of protein packed with omega-3 fatty acids, which are associated with a healthy heart and brain function. Grill or bake salmon, use it in place of red meat (salmon burgers can be a delicious substitute for traditional hamburgers), or try it cooked and topped on a bed of greens. Look for wild salmon to get the biggest health boost. Learn more about the benefits of eating fish.

### **Spinach**

Like other dark green, leafy vegetables, spinach is an excellent source of beta-carotene, a powerful health-promoting antioxidant. It is also a good source of vitamin K and folic acid. It can be served cooked as a side dish to a healthy meal, or raw in a salad with other vegetables such as tomatoes, red onion, and carrots.

### **Sweet potatoes**

Sweet potatoes are very high in beta-carotene and a great source of vitamin C, potassium, and fiber. This makes them a better option than a white potato. Try them baked, roasted, or mashed, or add them to soups and stews.

### **Tomatoes**

Tomatoes are not only low calorie and delicious, but are also full of the powerful antioxidant lycopene, which has been linked to lower rates of prostate and other cancers. They also are a good source of beta-carotene, vitamins C and K, and potassium. Tomatoes are great with almost every meal as a side dish, or in salads, sauces, or stews. Cherry and grape tomatoes make an easy, on-the-go snack.

### **Yogurt**

This tasty treat has long been recommended for good health and weight management. Low- or nonfat yogurt provides protein, calcium, and other vitamins and minerals. Plus, yogurt has a special benefit that few foods offer: probiotics, the friendly bacteria that culture the milk. Probiotics may aid digestion, reduce the risk of stomach ulcers, and help prevent yeast infections. Look for yogurt without a lot of added sugar. Buy plain yogurt and mix in your favorite fruits, or use it in place of sour cream in dips and on baked potatoes.

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