



# Health Tips

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with

Dr. D



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## Health Tip: "Super Foods" to Energize Your Diet

The specific foods that should be included in a list of 10 most healthy could be debated, but here are some that would have to be considered for that list. Common features among these foods are that they are packed with nutrients and have proven health benefits.

**1. Sweet potatoes** contain high amounts of fiber, vitamins C and E, folate and potassium. Their color is an indication that sweet potatoes are high in the antioxidant beta carotene which is converted to vitamin A in the body. Foods high in this antioxidant have been shown to reduce the risk of cancer. As a bonus, they are fat-free and relatively low in calories.



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**2. Almonds**, like all nuts, are a great source of protein. They are high in fiber, vitamin E and contain more calcium than any other nut. Most of the fat in almonds is monounsaturated, which can help in lowering LDL cholesterol and reduce your heart disease risk.

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**3. Salmon** is rich in omega-3 fatty acids - a type of fat that makes your blood less likely to form clots that may cause heart attacks. Other reported benefits of Omega-3s include decreasing triglyceride levels, lowering blood pressure and reducing the risk of stroke. The "wild" variety as compared to farm raised is preferable since it is thought to contain fewer contaminants.

**4. Broccoli** is packed with phytonutrients, plant compounds that are beneficial in preventing heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancer. Broccoli is also a good source of vitamins A and C - antioxidants that protect your body's cells from damage.



**5. Olive Oil**, and in particular, the minimally processed, "extra virgin" type, is considered to be a healthy source of fat. Olive oil contains monounsaturated fat that is considerably healthier than the saturated fats that come from animal sources. Epidemiologic studies have shown that those who get more of their fat from monounsaturated

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sources have lower incidences of heart disease and diabetes. A double benefit comes about when olive oil is substituted for saturated fats in the diet.

**6. Spinach** is loaded with vitamins A, C, and K, folate, potassium, magnesium, iron, lutein, and phytochemicals. It's also a good source of riboflavin, vitamin B-6, calcium, iron and magnesium. Eating spinach can provide protection against developing osteoporosis, heart disease, colon cancer, and arthritis. Spinach is also an excellent source of iron, a mineral that is particularly important for menstruating women, who are more at risk for iron deficiency.

**7. Apples** have earned the saying "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" honestly. Apples are extremely high in antioxidants and contain high amounts of vitamin C and fiber. Research in animals and humans has demonstrated benefits from eating apples in cancer prevention (lung, breast, colon, liver), diabetes management, Alzheimer's disease prevention, and cholesterol management. Because of pesticide contamination it is best to choose organic varieties if possible.

**8. Red Beans** are an excellent low-fat source of protein, magnesium and potassium, all needed for muscle function and health. Beans are also a great source of dietary fiber which helps lower your cholesterol, promotes satiety, so that you'll eat less, helps with constipation, and may help in preventing diabetes.

**9. Blueberries** contain large amounts of antioxidant phytonutrients called anthocyanidins. This plant pigment is responsible for the color of blueberries as well as for several of the health benefits. Blueberries are good sources of vitamin C, manganese, and fiber also. Some of the health benefits linked to blueberries include decreasing one's risk of heart disease, improving nighttime visual acuity, lowering the risk of developing of age-related macular degeneration of the eyes, and reducing the risk of developing certain types of cancer.

**10. Whole-grain breads** contain both wheat bran and wheat germ and offer impressive health benefits. The germ is the vitamin and mineral rich embryo of the wheat kernel that is removed during the refining of whole wheat grains to white flour. The bran is the fiber-rich component of whole wheat. In many studies, eating whole grains has been linked to protection against atherosclerosis, ischemic stroke, diabetes, insulin resistance, obesity, and premature death.

Other contenders for the healthy food hall of fame include yogurt, quinoa, tofu, tomatoes, fat-free milk, citrus fruits, and rice. Try to include as many of these "super foods" into your diet as possible and reap the health benefits.

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