

Food *for* Thought

The Healthy Choice



Nutritional News

10 Foods for Better Health

A hectic lifestyle makes it easy to skip a meal or just grab less-than-nutritious food on the run. But a busy day doesn't have to stand in the way of great health. A multivitamin is great insurance for days when you do miss a meal or two, but real food should always be your primary source of nutrients. Incorporate foods from the top ten list in all your meals whether at home or in restaurants. Keep the 10 foods on hand at all times at home and you'll be able to whip up a delicious meal or snack that will keep your energy up and your immune system strong.

Berries

All fruits are stellar sources of nutrients, but strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries stand out from the pack.

- They're high in vitamin and fiber content.
- They're an excellent source of antioxidants, compounds that protect our bodies from the stress of day to day living. The antioxidant anthocyanin has triple the stress-fighting power of vitamin C and is known to block cancer-causing damage as well as the effects of many age-related diseases.
- They give your memory a boost. The antioxidants in berries are believed to enhance brain function.

Citrus

We all know citrus fruits are loaded with vitamin C; one orange has a whole day's requirement. But that's not all citrus fruits have to offer.

- Citrus juice contains flavonoids, a phytonutrient that lowers the body's production of cholesterol, inhibits blood clot formation and boosts the bang of vitamin C.
- They're also loaded with soluble fiber which lowers cholesterol, maintains healthy blood sugar levels, and helps you to manage your weight.
- The scent of the citrus peel is produced by limonene, an oil found that might inhibit a variety of cancers.

Vegetables

Stock your fridge with a rainbow of vegetables and you'll have a natural pharmacy in your kitchen.

- Orange and yellow-hued veggies like winter squash, carrots and sweet potatoes and leafy greens contain carotenoids, a pigment our body converts to vitamin A. Eating lots of these vegetables will help maintain healthy skin and hair, protect against prostate cancer, promote healthy vision and even provide protection from sunburn.
- Lycopene, the plant chemical responsible for the ruby red of tomatoes and watermelon, is believed to fight cancer and promote heart health.
- Green vegetables like broccoli and spinach are sky-high in potent anti-cancer compounds like sulforaphane and quercetin.
- Although garlic and onions may lack the vibrant colors of other vegetables, they contain diallyl sulfide and saponins, compounds that add distinctive flavors to our recipes and fight cancer and heart disease.

Whole Grains

Whole grains are often in the news these days, and for good reason.

- They're delicious, inexpensive and packed with protein, B vitamins, minerals and fiber.
- Grains contain many of the same antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables.
- Research shows a diet high in whole grains may help prevent heart disease, some cancers, obesity and diabetes.

Look for grains in their least processed form, and try to eat them everyday. Some immediate benefits you might notice are stable blood sugar, less hunger between meals, and better weight management.

Salmon

All fish are great sources of protein and low in saturated fat. But cold-water fish, like salmon, mackerel and herring, are premiere sources of omega-3 essential fatty acids. These are fats our bodies can't produce, so it's essential we include them in our diet. Omega-3s offer many benefits.

- They reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer.
- They minimize the symptoms of arthritis and inflammatory diseases.
- They contribute to healthy skin and hair.
- They may help with depression.

Don't love fish? You can get your omega-3s from flaxseed, walnuts, almonds and grass-fed beef, although the oils are of a lesser nutritional quality than those found in seafood.

Legumes

The inexpensive legume family, which includes beans, peas, peanuts and lentils, has priceless benefits.

- Legumes are rich in folic acid, calcium, iron, potassium, zinc and antioxidants.
- Their high protein and complex carbohydrates provide steady energy that lasts for hours.
- They are especially high in soluble fiber, and a daily serving of cooked beans may lower blood cholesterol by as much as 18 percent, decreasing the risk of heart disease.
- Most legumes also contain protease inhibitors, compounds thought to suppress cancer cells and slow tumor growth.
- And then there are the prebiotics in beans, substances that aid in beneficial bacteria growth in the intestine.
- All legumes, and especially soy, are important in vegetarian diets for their high protein content.

Nuts and Seeds

Although high in calories, nuts often enable people to maintain or lose weight. A small handful eaten between meals or added to salads, grains or vegetables gives a sense of satiety and results in less total food intake. Nuts have great nutritional benefits, as well.

- Almonds, pecans and pistachios are rich in protein.
- Walnuts contain omega-3 fatty acids.
- Toss sesame seeds in a meal for extra calcium and vitamin E.
- Sesame, sunflower and pumpkin seeds are particularly good sources of phytosterols, also known as plant sterols, which promote heart health.

Lean Protein

Protein is an important part of every diet and is found in many different foods. Lean protein, the best kind, can be found in fish, skinless chicken and turkey, pork tenderloin and certain cuts of beef, like the top round. Low-fat dairy products like milk, yogurt, ricotta and other cheeses supply both protein and calcium.

- Protein is crucial for tissue repair, building and preserving muscle, and making important enzymes and hormones.
- Lean meats and dairy contribute valuable minerals like calcium, iron, selenium and zinc. These are not only essential for building bones, and forming and maintaining nerve function, but also for fighting cancer, forming blood cells and keeping immune systems robust.

Tea

Tea is the second most popular drink in the world (water is the top choice). Although most people think of tea as a soothing and delicious beverage, it possesses a remarkable wealth of antioxidants. All teas, whether black, green, oolong or white, are harvested from the leaves of a variety of plant known as the camellia sinensis. The primary distinction between the different teas is the amount of fermentation they undergo. Black teas are the most fermented, white teas the least. Herbal teas are not technically teas since they do not include camellia sinensis leaves.

- All true teas contain polyphenols, powerful antioxidants believed to protect against heart disease, certain cancers and stroke.
 - The various levels of fermentation affect teas in different ways. Recent studies have shown drinking green tea might boost metabolism, oolong teas can lower blood sugar, and black teas can promote oral health.
 - Tea contains half the caffeine of coffee.
- Tea is not just for drinking; it has been used for centuries in marinades and as a flavoring agent in dishes.

Olive Oil

Olive oil is a staple in any kitchen. It's the base of many salad dressings and is also used as an ingredient in sauces and marinades; as a dip for bread; and for sautéing, roasting, frying and baking. Extra-virgin olive oil can be used as a condiment when drizzled over a bowl of pasta or platter of roasted vegetables.

- Olive oil is an excellent source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fats that may lower the bad cholesterol and raise the good cholesterol.
- It contains Vitamin E and antioxidants.
- It's an excellent replacement for unhealthy saturated fats like butter.

Extra-virgin olive oil has the highest concentration of Vitamin E and antioxidants. Lighter olive oils like those labeled pure, refined or light contain lower concentrations of nutrients but withstand higher temperatures required for cooking. Although olive oil has great health benefits, it also has a lot of calories. It's 100 percent fat, and like all liquid oils, contains about 120 calories per tablespoon.