Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

# 10 "super foods" for better health



It is never too early (or too late!) to safeguard your health by eating a healthy, balanced diet. Good food is the foundation of good health and a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and legumes can help to ward off many common ailments such as heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis.

The following 10 “super foods” are among the most effective disease-fighters found in your supermarket.

**Soy.** Soy products are among the most nutritious of all legumes, containing all the amino acids a person requires. Soy products contain B vitamins, essential fatty acids, zinc and iron, and are often fortified with calcium to help prevent osteoporosis. Soy is a rich source of phytoestrogens, genistein and saponin, which help regulate hormone levels and can help alleviate PMS and symptoms of menopause. When it comes to heart health, soy lowers LDL (bad) cholesterol, a main contributor to the clogging of arteries.

2. **Garlic.** Garlic, along with its cousins onions, leeks, and shallots can help reduce pain, boost the immune system, stave off infection and destroy cancer cells. Containing the sulfur compounds, allicin and diallyl sulfide, the antioxidants quercetin and vitamins A and C, this excellent food has a wide-spectrum of antibiotic properties that work against bacteria and yeast infections. Garlic can also assist in lowering cholesterol and blood pressure, thereby reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke.
3. **Almonds.** Almonds have tremendous health benefits. They contain calcium, potassium, fiber, folate, magnesium, zinc, iron, and are among the richest in the antioxidant vitamin E, which cleans up free radicals and promotes healthy skin and hair. Almonds contain essential fatty acids, and similar to olive oil, has been found to lower artery-clogging LDL cholesterol.
4. **Green Tea.** Green Tea is low in caffeine and high in polyphenols, a cancer-fighting antioxidant. A University of Kansas study found that these catechins were 100 times more effective than vitamin C and 25 times more potent than vitamin E in blocking the development of cancerous cells. Green tea may reduce the risk of oral and colon cancer and protect against heart disease.
5. **Sweet Potato.** Sweet potatoes, and all orange, red and yellow fruits and vegetables are loaded with vitamin A, and beta-carotene. These vitamins protect against carcinogens and may also help to safeguard healthy vision. Sweet potatoes are a reliable source of carotenoids, powerful phytochemicals believed to fight cancer.
6. **Greens.** Dark green, leafy vegetables like kale, mustard greens, mesclun mix, beet greens and broccoli are rich in nutrients to keep the eyes healthy. Lutein is the active phtyochemical which aids in healthy vision. These vegetables are also rich in vitamin E, to help keep skin supple, and in calcium, to help build strong bones.
7. **Flax.** Flax contains the omega 3 essential fatty acids required for optimal brain and cell function Omega 3’s are the building blocks for the hormones that regulate our inflammatory systems. Consuming flax seeds ground in bread or cereal, or flax oil by the spoonful or in salad dressing may help relieve migraines and decrease inflammation from arthritis. Flax also helps the immune system function, regulates cholesterol levels, and may aid in keeping a healthy metabolism.
8. **Shiitake Mushrooms.** In Chinese medicine, mushrooms are valued as a powerful cancer fighter. Shiitakes are loaded with lentinan, an anti-cancer agent. Shiitakes also contain sulfur compounds, which, like garlic, help fight disease by stimulating the immune system.
9. **Seaweed.** Sea vegetables—primarily seaweeds—are extremely high in antioxidants, fiber, magnesium, potassium and iron. They also contain anti-inflammatory and immune-boosting

characteristics. Wakeame, typically used in soups, stew, and salads is known for its calcium content. Kombu and kelp, are helpful in lowering blood pressure. Nori, most often found in sushi rolls, is a great blood thinner and has anti-bacterial properties.

10. **Quinoa.** Although often classified as a grain, quinoa is a member of the same family as spinach. Quinoa tops are edible, but it's the seeds that are most frequently used in cooking. Just one cup of quinoa provides 7g of protein and provides lysine, an amino acid missing in other grains. This ancient grain is gluten-free, easy to digest and contains calcium, magnesium and phosphorus needed for healthy bones. As well as a variety of amino acids, quinoa also contains minerals such as zinc, potassium and B vitamins.

Try some of these foods on their own or look for recipes that include any of these ingredients and begin incorporating them into your daily diet. While these foods are rich in health benefits, remember to follow Canada’s Food Guide to ensure your body gets all the nutrients it needs.

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