

Welcome to the **MNT Knowledge Center**, your source for our most detailed content on specific conditions and subjects. Click through to [Knowledge Center Home](#) to read more.



Last updated on Wed 20 Nov 2013

Originally published on Thu 10 May 2012



Nutrition / Diet



Imagine a choice of foods that were tasty, nutritious and good for your health - i.e. they helped you maintain a healthy body weight, improved your overall mood, and reduced your risk of developing diseases.

This Medical News Today information article provides details on the top ten foods considered to be the most healthy, according to surveys and sources across North America and Western Europe. They include:

1. [apples](#)
2. [almonds](#)
3. [broccoli](#)
4. [blueberries](#)
5. [oily fish](#)
6. [leafy green vegetables](#)
7. [sweet potatoes](#)
8. [wheat germ](#)
9. [avocados](#)
10. [oatmeal](#)

You may also find another MNT article - [What are the health benefits of popular foods?](#) - interesting.

1

Apples are an excellent source of antioxidants, which combat free radicals. Free radicals are damaging substances generated in the body that cause undesirable changes and are involved in the aging process and some diseases.

Some animal studies have found that an antioxidant found in apples (polyphenols) might extend lifespans.

Researchers at The Florida State University said that apples are a "miracle fruit".

In their study, the investigators found that older women who starting a regime of eating apples daily experienced **a 23 percent drop in levels of bad cholesterol (LDL) and a 4% increase in good cholesterol (HDL)** after just six months.¹



"An Apple A Day Keeps The Grim Reaper Away"

treeR

Apples and pears can reduce stroke risk by 52%. Researchers from Wageningen University in the Netherlands, found that consuming fruit with white edible portions, such as pears and apples, can potentially reduce the risk of **stroke** by 52%. They reported their findings in the journal *Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association*.²

2

Almonds are rich in nutrients, including magnesium, **vitamin E**, iron, **calcium**, fiber, and riboflavin. **A scientific review published in *Nutrition Reviews***³ found that almonds as a food may help maintain healthy **cholesterol** levels.

The authors wrote:

"The message that almonds, in and of themselves, are a heart-healthy snack should be emphasized to consumers. Moreover, when almonds are incorporated into a healthy, balanced diet, the benefits are even greater."

Almonds have more fiber than any other tree nut.

The fatty acid profile of almonds, which is made up of 91-94% unsaturated fatty acids, may partly explain why it helps maintain healthy cholesterol levels.



Almonds are rich in fiber, vitamins, iron and other vital nutrients

treeR

Appetite decreased by snacking on almonds, no increase in body weight. Research published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that participants who ate 1.5 ounces of dry-roasted, lightly salted almonds every day experienced reduced hunger and improved dietary vitamin E and "good" fat intake with no increase in **body weight**.⁴

Research review suggests almonds contain nutrients that provide cardioprotective effects. A scientific review, published in *Nutrition Reviews*, suggests that nutrient-rich almonds may promote heart health, and may help maintain healthy cholesterol levels.⁵

Eating nuts every day may prolong life. Eating a handful of nuts a day could help you live longer and lower a your risk of death from **heart disease** and **cancer**, according to a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.⁶

3

Broccoli is rich in fiber, calcium, potassium, folate and phytonutrients. Phytonutrients are compounds which reduce the risk of developing heart disease, **diabetes** and some cancers. Broccoli also contains vitamin C, as well as **beta-carotene**, an antioxidant.



Boiling broccoli for too long can destroy much of its vital nutrients

A single 100 gram serving of broccoli can provide you with over 150 percent of the recommended daily intake of vitamin C, **which in large doses can potentially shorten the duration of the common cold.**⁷

Another ingredient, sulforaphane, which exists in broccoli, is also said to have anti-cancer as well as anti-inflammatory qualities. However, overcooking can destroy most of the benefits.

tree

Lightly steamed broccoli contains the powerful anticancer enzyme myrosinase. Researchers from the University of Illinois wrote in *Nutrition and Cancer* that lightly steamed broccoli can significantly reduce your risk of developing cancers (steaming it slightly does not destroy the enzyme myrosinase). However, if you overcook it the health benefits are undermined.⁸

Eating broccoli may help prevent osteoarthritis. A UK study found that sulforaphane, a compound found in broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage and Brussels sprouts, could help fight osteoarthritis, the most common form of **arthritis**.⁹

3

Blueberries are rich in fiber, antioxidants and phytonutrients. Phytonutrients are natural chemicals found in plants.

Unlike minerals and vitamins that are also found in plant foods, phytonutrients are not essential for keeping us alive. However, they may help prevent disease and keep the body working properly.

According to a study carried out at Harvard Medical School, elderly people who eat plenty of blueberries (and strawberries) are **less likely to suffer from cognitive decline**, compared to other people of their age who do not.¹⁰

Scientists at Texas Woman's University found that blueberries help in curbing **obesity**. Plant polyphenols, which are abundant in blueberries, **have been shown to reduce the development of fat cells (adipogenesis)**, while inducing the breakdown of lipids and fat (lipolysis).¹¹



Blueberries may help in controlling body weight

Regular blueberry consumption can **reduce the risk of hypertension (high blood pressure)** by 10%, because of the berry's bioactive compounds, anthocyanins, scientists from East Anglia University, England, and Harvard University, USA reported in the *American Journal of Nutrition*.¹²

tree

Blueberries and strawberries may reduce women's risk of heart attack. Women could reduce their risk of **heart attack** by as much as 33 percent by eating three or more servings of blueberries and strawberries per week. Researchers believe it is because these fruits contain high levels of dietary flavonoids known as anthocyanins.¹³

5

Examples of **oily fish** include salmon, trout, mackerel, herring, sardines and anchovies.

These types of fish have oil in their tissues and around the gut. Their lean fillets contain up to 30% oil, specifically, **omega-3** fatty acids. These oils are known to provide benefits for the heart, as well as the nervous system.

Oily fish are also known to provide benefits for patients with inflammatory conditions, such as arthritis.

Oily fish also contain vitamins A and D.

Scientists at UCLA's Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center found that **prostate cancer progression was significantly slowed** when patients went on a low-fat diet with fish oil supplements.¹⁴



Oily fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids

Eating oily fish could cut your risk of rheumatoid arthritis. Eating one portion of oily fish every week could reduce your risk of developing **rheumatoid arthritis** by 50%, according to a study published in the journal *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*.¹⁵

6

Studies have shown that a high intake of **dark-leafy vegetables, such as spinach or cabbage** may significantly lower a person's risk of developing diabetes type 2.

Researchers at the University of Leicester, England, said that the impact of dark green vegetables on human health should be investigated further, after they gathered data from six studies. They reported their findings in the *BMJ*.¹⁶

Spinach, for example, is very rich in antioxidants, especially when uncooked, steamed or very lightly boiled. It is a good source of vitamins A, B₆, C, E and K, as well as selenium, niacin, zinc, phosphorus, copper, **folic acid**, potassium, calcium, manganese, betaine, and iron.



Boiling spinach can reduce its levels of good nutrients.

7

Sweet potatoes are rich in dietary fiber, beta carotene, complex **carbohydrates**, vitamin C, vitamin B₆, as well as carotene (the pink, yellow ones).

The Center for Science in the Public Interest, USA, compared the nutritional value of sweet potatoes to other vegetables.¹⁷ The **sweet potato ranked number one**, when vitamins A and C, iron, calcium, protein and complex carbohydrates were considered.



8

Wheat germ is the part of wheat that germinates to grow into a plant - the embryo of the seed. Germ, along with bran, is commonly a by-product of the milling; when cereals are refined, the germ and bran are often milled out.

Wheat germ is high in several vital nutrients, such as vitamin E, folic acid (folate), thiamin, zinc, magnesium, phosphorus, as well as fatty alcohols and essential fatty acids.

Wheat germ is also a good source of fiber.

9

Many people avoid **avocados** because of its high fat content; they believe that avoiding all fats leads to better health and easier-to-control body weight - this is a myth. Approximately 75% of the calories in an avocado come from fat; mostly monosaturated fat.



Weight-for-weight, avocados have 35% more potassium than bananas.

Avocados are also very rich in B vitamins, as well as vitamin K and vitamin E.

Avocados also have a very high fiber content of 25% soluble and 75% insoluble fiber.

Studies have shown that regular avocado consumption lowers blood cholesterol levels.

Avocado extracts are currently being studied in the laboratory to see whether they might be useful for treating diabetes or **hypertension**.

Researchers from Ohio State University found that nutrients taken from avocados were able to stop **oral cancer** cells, and even destroy some of the pre-cancerous cells.



Avocado consumption may be associated with better diet quality. Consuming avocados may be associated with better diet quality and nutrient intake level, lower intake of added sugars, lower body weight, **BMI** and waist circumferences, according to a study published in *Nutrition Journal*.¹⁸

0

Oatmeal is meal made from rolled or ground oats. In the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, the term "porridge" or "porridge oats" are common terms for the breakfast cereal that is usually cooked.

Interest in oatmeal has increased considerably over the last twenty years because of its health benefits.

Studies have shown that if you eat a bowl of oatmeal everyday your blood cholesterol levels, especially if they are too high, will drop, because of the cereal's soluble fiber content. When findings were published in the 1980s, an "oat bran craze" spread across the USA and Western Europe. The oats craze dropped off in the 1990s.

In 1997, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) agreed that foods with high levels of rolled oats or oat bran could include data on their labels about their cardiovascular heart benefits if accompanied with a low-fat diet. This was followed by another surge in oatmeal popularity.

Oats is rich in complex carbohydrates, as well as water-soluble fiber, which slow digestion down and stabilize levels of blood-glucose.

Oatmeal is very rich in B vitamins, omega-3 fatty acids, folate, and potassium.



Coarse or steel-cut oats contain more fiber than instant varieties.

Written by Christian Nordqvist

Copyright: Medical News Today

Not to be reproduced without the permission of Medical News Today.



References

Additional Information

Citations

1. *"Apple a day' advice rooted in science"* Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, via EurekAlert!. Accessed November 19th 2013.
2. Linda M. Oude Griep, MSc; W.M. Monique Verschuren, PhD; Daan Kromhout, MPH, PhD; Marga C. Ocké, PhD; Johanna M. Geleijnse, PhD. *"Colors of Fruit and Vegetables and 10-Year Incidence of Stroke"* *STROKE* 110.611152, Published online before print September 15, 2011, doi: 10.1161/STROKEAHA.110.611152. Accessed November 19th 2013.
3. Berryman CE, Preston AG, Karmally W, Deckelbaum RJ, Kris-Etherton PM. *"Effects of almond consumption on the reduction of LDL-cholesterol: a discussion of potential mechanisms and future research directions."* *Nutr Rev.* 2011 Apr;69(4):171-85. doi: 10.1111/j.1753-4887.2011.00383.x. Accessed November 19th 2013
4. S Y Tan and R D Mattes. *"Appetitive, dietary and health effects of almonds consumed with meals or as snacks: a randomized, controlled trial"* *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2013) 67, 1205–1214; doi:10.1038/ejcn.2013.184; published online 2 October 2013. Accessed November 19th 2013.
5. Berryman CE, Preston AG, Karmally W, Deckelbaum RJ, Kris-Etherton PM. *"Effects of almond consumption on the reduction of LDL-cholesterol: a discussion of potential mechanisms and future research directions."* *Nutr Rev.* 2011 Apr;69(4):171-85. doi: 10.1111/j.1753-4887.2011.00383.x. Accessed November 19th 2013.

6. Ying Bao, M.D., Sc.D., Jiali Han, Ph.D., Frank B. Hu, M.D., Ph.D., Edward L. Giovannucci, M.D., Sc.D., Meir J. Stampfer, M.D., Dr.P.H., Walter C. Willett, M.D., Dr.P.H., and Charles S. Fuchs, M.D., M.P.H. *"Association of Nut Consumption with Total and Cause-Specific Mortality"* *N Engl J Med* 2013; 369:2001-2011 November 21, 2013 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1307352. Accessed November 25th 2013.
7. Douglas RM, Chalker EB, Treacy B. *"Vitamin C for preventing and treating the common cold."* *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2000;(2):CD000980.

Rate this article (click to rate)

What are the top 10 healthy foods?

Public / Patient: ★★★★★ 3.8 (167 votes)
Health Professionals: ★★★★★ 4.2 (93 votes)



 3.9k

 Like

 Tweet

113

102

403

 Share

 Share



Most recent opinions are shown first

Healthy Food

Posted by **Saurabh** on 13 Jan 2014 at 7:46 pm

I agree most of tips u said and I m very glad To maintain my body special.....

[Post a Reply](#) — [Alert a Moderator](#)

Healthy Food

Posted by **amit** on 2 Dec 2013 at 3:03 am

Health food is food considered to be beneficial to health in ways that go beyond a normal healthy diet required for human nutrition. . Foods considered "healthy" may be natural foods, organic foods, whole foods, and sometimes dietary supplements. Such products are sold in health food stores or in the health/organic sections of supermarkets. "Health food" may also refer to functional food that designed to address specific health concerns, such as the prevention of disease. Additionally, "health food" is sometimes used in contrast with "junk food", which may be high in calories but has little other nutritional value.

[Post a Reply](#) — [Alert a Moderator](#)

Article Format - top 10 healthy foods

Posted by **Derrick** on 26 Oct 2013 at 10:37 am

Thank you for posting the article on one page. Every time I see an article with a title that starts with a number, I cringe because I think it will be an article that will needlessly stretch over 10+ pages. Seeing an article that was all on one page was a pleasant surprise. Sorry, I know it's not about healthy food but I just had to say something lol.

[Post a Reply](#) — [Alert a Moderator](#)

Food to gain weight

Posted by **Liam** on 17 Oct 2013 at 10:27 am

the food on: each different effect it. I noticed in 10 foods are the food supply for dieting. Can you help me find this food for weight gain? thank you very much.

[Post a Reply](#) — [Alert a Moderator](#)

Need to live a healthy life.

Posted by **kolawole oluwatola** on 17 Oct 2013 at 4:46 am

What kind of exercise is good for one who notices the development of potbelly. What are the healthy tips one needs to know and practice for awesome healthy living habit. thank you.

[Post a Reply](#) — [Alert a Moderator](#)

I want to be healthy and look younger

Posted by **Gina N.** on 13 Oct 2013 at 2:22 pm

What kind of food, vegetables and fruit should one be eating every day to be looking younger. Please, I need your help, I really want my skin to be change and looking younger.

[Post a Reply](#) — [Alert a Moderator](#)

Superstar list of healthy foods

Posted by **Leann** on 22 Aug 2013 at 10:31 am

I am happy to see some of the foods I eat regularly make the list. I knew Broccoli was a superstar and try to incorporate that daily into my diet. I also like apples and eat them pretty often too. Avocado, I happen to love and very glad to see it is healthy. Eating healthy can really change the way we look and feel. Doing so can only make us stronger.

[Post a Reply](#) — [Alert a Moderator](#)

whoa easy read - top 10 healthy foods

Posted by **Danny** on 13 Aug 2013 at 11:10 am

greats article!!! got to do when like you get the greatest body ever!!!!!!1

[Post a Reply](#) — [Alert a Moderator](#)

Latest 8 opinions shown. For all opinions, click through to the [full thread](#).



Join the discussion

Please note that **we publish the name you give us**, but we **do not publish** your email address. We will email you to let you know when your comment has been published but will not use it for any other purpose. Please see our [privacy policy](#) for more information.

If you write about specific medications, operations, or procedures please **do not** name healthcare professionals by name.

All opinions are moderated before being added to our discussions, and each field below is **required**.

* Name (published)

* Email Address

* Opinion Subject

* Your Opinion

Spam prevention

What shape is a square window?

Submit Opinion



For any corrections of factual information, or to contact our editorial team, please [use our feedback form](#). Please send any medical news or health news press releases to: pressrelease@medicalnewstoday.com

Note: Any medical information published on this website is not intended as a substitute for informed medical advice and you should not take any action before consulting with a health care professional. For more information, please read our [terms and conditions](#).



Connect with us through your social networks.



What Is Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is a steroid vitamin, a group of fat-soluble prohormones, which encourages the absorption and metabolism of calcium and phosphorous.



The Eight Most Popular Diets

From Atkins to Vegan, South Beach to Mediterranean, we have selected the most popular diets available today .



How Many Calories Should I Eat?

The number of calories people should eat each day depends on several factors, including their age, size, height, sex, lifestyle, and overall general health.



How Much Sugar Is In Your Food?

These days we're all being warned to cut down on our sugar consumption. But, sometimes we can be unaware of just how much sugar is in the food that we are eating. We have analyzed the sugar content of common everyday foods and drinks.



What are the health benefits of popular foods?

Looking at the health benefits associated with a wide range of popular foods. If you're wondering what foods you should be including in your diet, look no further.



Month

Quarter

Year

This category's most read articles:

- ☑ Caffeine may boost long-term memory
- ☑ Multivitamins 'waste of money,' say medical experts
- ☑ Meat, smoking have strongest links to cancer incidence rates
- ☑ Avocado with lunch may help with weight management
- ☑ What are the health benefits of carrots?
- ☑ Our food choices are influenced by social norms, study suggests
- ☑ An apple a day keeps vascular mortality at bay, study suggests
- ☑ Vitamin E may combat functional decline from Alzheimer's disease



View information on medical conditions:

-- Select Medical Condition --



Want to see our most detailed pages about specific conditions and subjects?

Visit our [Knowledge Center](#).

etajivan

- our most popular news
- all written articles
- complete category list
- MNT knowledge center

May

- personalize MNT
- login to your MNT
- MNT newsletters
- share our content

Media

- about us
- contact us
- advertising with MNT
- submit news articles

More

- accessibility
- help & faq
- useful links from MNT
- newsfeeds from MNT

[privacy policy](#) | [terms & conditions](#)

MediLexicon International Ltd, Bexhill-on-Sea, UK

© 2004-2014 All rights reserved. MNT (logo) is the registered trade mark of MediLexicon International Limited.