

10 foods that can promote a longer and healthier life

Written by MEG SIBAL, M.D.

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ALTHOUGH the jury is still out when it comes to a lot of foods...as to which foods are good for you and which ones are not...most experts agree on some foods you should definitely eat more of, says the October 2010 issue of the UCLA Division of Geriatrics' Healthy/Years.

Dana Ellis Hunnes, RD, dietitian at UCLA Health System offers a list of the top 10 “power foods” to help you live a longer, healthier life.

However, in order to avoid problems with pesticides and additives, it's best to look for fresh and, if possible, organic versions of these foods, and to wash them well, adds the health letter.

If some produce is out of season, stocking your freezer with frozen fruits and veggies can help you eat healthy all year long.

The Top 10 “power foods” include:

- Almonds — “These nuts are packed with nutrients, such as fiber, riboflavin, magnesium, iron and calcium,” says Hunnes. In fact, almonds have more calcium than any other nut...75 milligrams (mg) in one serving (about 23 almonds). In addition, a serving of almonds provides half of your body's Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of Vitamin E.
- Apples — A great source of pectin, a soluble fiber that can help lower blood cholesterol and glucose levels, fresh apples are also good sources of Vitamin C...an antioxidant that protects

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your body's cells from damage, says Hunnes. Also, Vitamin C helps form the connective tissue collagen, keeps your capillaries and blood vessels healthy and aids in the absorption of iron.

- Bananas — Aside from being a great source of potassium, phytonutrients and multiple vitamins, bananas are also a good source of resistant starch, which helps you feel full, aids in digestion and promotes gastrointestinal health.
- Blueberries — The phytonutrients in blueberries may help prevent urinary tract infection, says Hunnes. Blueberries also provide a low-calorie fiber and Vitamin C...just one cup of fresh blueberries has 84 calories, 3.6 grams of fiber and 14 mg of Vitamin C. They may also improve short-term memory and promote healthy aging.
- Broccoli — A source of calcium, potassium, folate and fiber, broccoli also contains phytonutrients that may help prevent chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. Broccoli is also a good source of Vitamins A and C, both antioxidants that protect your body's cells from damage.
- Beans — Aside from being good sources of iron, magnesium, phosphorous, potassium, copper and thiamine, they are an excellent low-fat, low-calorie source of protein and dietary fiber, adds Hunnes.
- Beets — The pigment that gives beets their rich, purple-crimson color, betacyanin, is also a powerful cancer-fighting agent, according to Hunnes. Besides being an excellent source of the B vitamin folate, beets are a very good source of manganese and potassium, as well as dietary fiber, Vitamin C, magnesium, copper, iron and phosphorous.
- Spinach — This leafy green veggie is a great source of Vitamins A and C and folate and provides riboflavin, Vitamin B6, calcium, iron and magnesium. The plant compounds in spinach may boost your immune system and may help keep your hair and skin healthy, adds Hunnes.
- Sweet potatoes — The deep orange-yellow color of sweet potatoes tells you they're high in the antioxidant betacarotene, which is converted to Vitamin A in the body, says the health letter.

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In addition to being fat-free and relatively low in calories (one small sweet potato has just 54 calories), sweet potatoes are good sources of fiber, Vitamins B6, C and E, folate and potassium.

- **Wheat germ** — Wheat germ is the part of the seed that's responsible for the development and growth of the new plant sprout. Though only a small part of the wheat seed, the germ is a highly concentrated source of nutrients, including niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, Vitamin E, folate, magnesium, phosphorous, potassium, iron and zinc. The germ also contains protein, fiber and some fat, concludes the health letter.