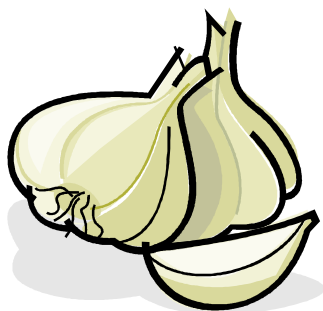


Super Foods

It seems that almost on a regular basis we hear reports in the media about the latest study proving all sorts of benefits of eating certain foods. Science is finally catching up with what generations of people have long known - the therapeutic benefits of food. All those 'old wives' tales' you may have heard growing up are now proving to be true. Yes, garlic is actually beneficial against colds, there's a good reason to be eating your greens, ginger really is good at curing nausea and that stinky cabbage you may have pushed around your plate as a youngster (or maybe even now as a grown up?) belies it's potent protective properties. The list of foods I have chosen here is only a small sample of the so-called 'super foods' but these are the ones that have garnered the most attention lately and have been shown to be amongst the best of the best.



Garlic

Where do we start with garlic? It really is a wonder food. It has antibacterial, antiviral, anti-cancer, anti-blood clotting, anti-inflammatory, cholesterol-reducing, immune boosting and decongestive properties.

Whew, what a list! Over the centuries garlic has always been seen as a potent disease fighter. Recipes for garlic prescriptions for complaints such as headaches, throat disorders and physical weakness have been found on an Egyptian papyrus dating from around 1500 B.C. The Greeks,

Romans, Chinese and Japanese have all used garlic over the centuries. Recently science has caught up and studies are proving garlic's therapeutic benefits. A couple of notable ones include tests at UCLA showing that garlic may kill viruses responsible for colds and flus acting like a decongestant and a study of 42,000 older women in Iowa, USA found that those who ate garlic more than once a week were about half as likely to develop colon cancer as those who didn't.

Have it raw or cooked but cooked garlic tends to be gentler on the stomach. Be careful not to get too carried away as too much raw garlic can cause bloating and diarrhoea. Also having it in its natural form instead of in capsules or pills is best. Its active properties get lost once they have been processed. However the main problem with garlic, as we all know, is the BREATH problem. Apparently the best thing for it is to chew parsley! That and maybe just keeping a safe distance!

Greens

This includes spinach, kale, broccoli, brussels sprouts. Packed full of an antioxidant called lutein, it is being hailed as a protector against macular degeneration which is the leading cause of blindness in older people. A high lutein intake has also been linked to a lowered risk of prostate, lung, ovarian and breast cancer.

Spinach is worth singling out. It is rich in potassium, magnesium, vitamin K and in particular folic acid. What's so special about folic acid? Helps to prevent serious birth defects, heart disease, strokes, depression and maybe even Alzheimer's. Eat it raw or cooked but the antioxidants are better absorbed if you cook it with a little olive oil.



Cabbage

The much maligned cabbage has been given a hard time over the years. Derided for its gas inducing properties, its smell (I'll never forget the first time my husband got a whiff of the cabbage that my mum was fermenting into sauerkraut-priceless!) and its texture many people don't realise what an amazing food this is. Some of its therapeutic benefits include: lowers the risk of cancer, especially colon; prevents and heals ulcers (juice especially); stimulates the immune system; kills bacteria and viruses. It's packed full of a potent blend of therapeutic compounds responsible for the above. When we talk about cabbage we mean all of the varieties: green, red, savoy, nap and bok choy. Shred it, slice it, chop it. Eat it raw in salads, sauté it with some garlic, ferment it (sauerkraut and kim-chi), juice it. Doesn't matter how you do it just eat it!



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Super Foods continued...

Spices

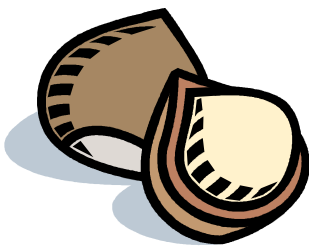
Ginger - a natural anti-inflammatory which may relieve inflammation in arthritis, heart disease, stroke and maybe even cancer. A Sydney University study has also shown that it acts like aspirin, thinning the blood. Also a good suppressor of nausea. Drink it as a tea, grate it on stir fries and salads and juice it.



Turmeric - is rich in curcumin which studies are showing is a potent anti-inflammatory particularly in relation to Alzheimer's. Researchers suspect that curcumin in curry powder may be one reason that India has such low rates of Alzheimer's disease. Good ways to eat turmeric is to mix it in with rice when you do a stir fry, sprinkle it on steamed vegetables and of course the good old curry (the light vegetable and lean meat ones of course!)

Nuts

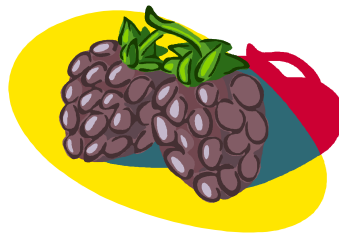
You're probably sick of trainers telling you to snack on nuts but there's a good reason we go on about them. They're high in protein keeping you fuller for longer. Also high in those good fats we often talk about, particularly walnuts which are high in omega-3s. Brazil nuts are the richest plant source of selenium a potent heart-disease inhibitor amongst its many other properties.



But the scientific research has now shown that they are also high in compounds called protease inhibitors which can inhibit the growth and progression of various types of cancers. Eat them raw as snacks or sprinkle them crushed in salads or as a crunchy coating for fish or chicken - yum!

Berries

Blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries - packed full of antioxidants. The main benefits of antioxidants are as free-radical busters! Free radicals can be made naturally by the body but are usually taken care of by the immune system. But when they are introduced by environmental factors like pollution, cigarette smoke or by eating too much processed foods they can start to cause damage by floating around our cells waiting to penetrate them and cause changes leading to disease. Antioxidants roam around mopping up these nasties. A very simplistic explanation I know but you get the drift. But the wonderful berry is also good for the brain, boosting short-term memory, protecting against heart disease and stroke by combating hardening of the arteries and blueberries have even been shown to have anti-diarrheal properties.



Tea

Good old tea. Who would have thought that such humble little leaves could pack such a powerful therapeutic punch? Both black and green tea are astonishing the scientific community of late with studies that are showing it to be a potential heart- tonic, fat-buster, brain booster, cancer blocker, cavity-fighter, antiviral agent, cholesterol suppressor and detoxifier. Really puts it into the super-duper category, the king of the superfoods! (yes, tea is a food) The tannins in tea are a polyphenol, a compound that exhibits anti-inflammatory properties. Green tea however has an extra property called EGCG which makes it even more potent than black tea. EGCG does many remarkable things but the main one that you would be interested in is in its ability to stimulate the body to burn energy, notably fat. Got your attention now huh! A study in Switzerland gave a

group of men three capsules daily containing the equivalent of the EGCG found in two to three cups of green tea. It caused them to burn 4% more energy-that's 80 additional calories a day. This wasn't caused by increasing the heart rate or from the caffeine content-just from little ol' EGCG. However before you all start guzzling litres of tea and come complaining to me that you're not losing fat you need to be consuming a good diet and exercising to see the results of this extra calorie burning effect. Some tips for getting the best out of your tea:

- Steep tea leaves in hot water for 3-5 minutes to release the antioxidants and bags are as good as loose tea
- Herbal teas aren't considered 'real teas' and don't have all of the above properties
- Decaffeinated tea isn't as potent as the caffeinated stuff
- Tea with milk doesn't cut it - it reduces the tea's ability to improve blood flow and vascular function
- Iced tea is okay as long as it is made from real tea bags or loose tea. The bottled stuff has minimal antioxidant content!

Anna

References:

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The Food Pharmacy - Jean Carper
Prescription for Dietary Wellness - Phyllis A Balch
The Nutrient Bible - Henry Osiecki

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