

Top 10 Power Foods

1. Salmon



Fatty fishes sure don't sound healthful, but study after study confirms that consumption of salmon, for instance, lowers the risk of death from heart disease. Substances in salmon known as omega-3 fatty acids help the heart by preventing sudden and fatal disturbances in heart rhythm, the cause of death in 250,000 Americans a year. You are less likely to die from a heart attack if you eat at least one serving of salmon or other fatty fish each week, according to the American Heart Association. Fresh fish might taste better, but canned salmon also is high in omega-3 fatty acids.

2. Nuts



Almonds, peanuts, walnuts and hazelnuts are bite-size powerhouses of health-promoting substances that help prevent heart disease and cancer. Nuts also contain monounsaturated fat, the kind celebrated for its ability to lower harmful cholesterol. In addition, nutritionists consider nuts a perfect food for those needing to lower their triglycerides or blood pressure. They're rich in antioxidant vitamin E, which eliminates cell-damaging free radicals. Two ounces a day of almonds are enough to provide optimum health benefits.

3. Beans



According to nutritionists, beans are a great source of protein, fiber and complex carbohydrates for long-lasting energy. They are low in fat and high in the B vitamin folic acid as well as copper, zinc, magnesium and potassium. Research shows that two servings a day of any bean can lower blood cholesterol as much as 27 percent.

4. Oranges



These citrus fruits are loaded with cancer-battling bioflavonoids and immune system-boosting vitamin C. If that's not enough, the limonin found in oranges and other citrus fruits fuels the immune system to fight cancer. Phytochemicals in oranges, tangerines and grapefruits may help the body resist carcinogens, prevent harmful blood clotting and avoid blindness.

5. Spinach



Popeye was onto something. This dark, leafy green vegetable is packed with vitamin C and beta carotene, both potent antioxidants that fight cancer and boost immunity. In addition, spinach and other dark, leafy greens are top-notch sources of vitamin A, calcium, iron, fiber and other disease-fighting nutrients.

6. Sweet potatoes



It is a shame many eat sweet potatoes only on Thanksgiving; they're among the most nutritious of vegetables. They are packed with disease-fighting beta carotene and other antioxidants. Eaten with the skin, a baked sweet potato is an excellent fiber source. Don't be confused by those labeled yams. Yams sold in the grocery stores are actually a darker-looking variety of sweet potatoes.

7. Berries



Now referred to as "the secret of youth," these colorful fruits contain chemicals that act as antioxidants, believed by scientists to protect the body from the stresses of age. Recent studies show that those who eat blueberries, strawberries, cranberries and blackberries have a lower incidence of cancer.

8. Oatmeal



How good is oatmeal? Nutritious enough that it may be one of the first foods to have its own health claim approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The regulatory agency allows oatmeal manufacturers to claim that eating this whole grain reduces the risk of heart disease when it is part of a low-fat diet. As with other whole grains, it's the fiber in oatmeal that has been shown to help reduce cholesterol and risk of heart disease. Also, added oatmeal in a woman's diet might reduce her risk of breast cancer.

9. Tomatoes



While we say "tomato," nutritionists say "lycopene." This highly touted carotenoid could be the key to preventing blood clots that cause heart disease and strokes. In produce, raw is usually healthier than cooked, but studies prove the opposite for tomatoes. Cooked tomato foods, such as soup, pasta sauce and even ketchup, provide the most powerful doses of lycopene. Tomatoes also may deter macular degeneration, dementia and sun damage to the skin.

10. Low-fat milk



The average person fails to get enough milk or other low-fat dairy products to satisfy his or her daily calcium requirement, a must to prevent the bone loss associated with osteoporosis. In promising recent studies, a high intake of calcium also seemed to reduce the chance of colorectal cancer