

THE 100 HEALTHIEST FOODS

BY JANIS JIBRIN, R.D.

In the fast-paced world of nutrition research, it seems like a hot discovery hits the news every week. So we asked prominent scientists doing groundbreaking work on how edibles stave off illness to pin down the 100 most nutrient-packed foods. To make our list, a food had to be very rich in at least one vitamin, mineral, or other compound known to protect against cancer, heart disease, or other diseases. Be supermarket smart and use the next four pages as your shopping list. Your body will be glad you did!

Glossary

Anthocyanins: Plant pigments that help protect you from heart disease.

Antioxidant: A substance that prevents harmful molecules called free radicals from damaging DNA. Free radicals may be a cause of cancer, heart disease, and other chronic diseases.

Carotenoids: Antioxidant plant pigments that are converted to vitamin A by the body. There are several types: beta-carotene, a major plant source of vitamin A, which lowers the risk for heart disease and cancer; lutein and zeaxanthin, which are linked to a reduced risk of age-related macular degeneration, a major cause of vision loss and blindness in older adults; lycopene, linked with a lower risk of heart attack and cancer.

Conjugated Linoleic acid: Beef, lamb, and full-fat cheeses are rich in CLA, which halts tumor formation in animals.

Ellagic acid: A plant compound that detoxifies and traps carcinogens.

Flavonoids: Plant compounds that deter cancer in a number of ways.

Folic acid: B vitamin that helps prevent birth defects and lower levels of homocysteine, an amino acid linked to heart disease.

Indoles: Compounds that help fight cancer.

Isoflavones: Compounds that act as weak estrogens. Eating 90 mg of isoflavones daily can improve bone density.

Isothiocyanates: Compounds, including sulphoraphane, that protect against cancer.

Lignans: Phytoestrogens that help prevent cancer.

Monounsaturated fat: The heart-healthiest type of fat.

Omega-3 fatty acids: A type of fat that reduces the risk factors for heart disease.

Organosulfides: Substances that help lower cholesterol.

Phytoestrogens: Compounds that are structurally similar to human estrogen. One difference: They do not promote breast and endometrial cancer. In fact, they help protect against these cancers, while providing many of the same heart- and bone-protective effects as human estrogen.

Benefits Guide

| Food | Fat/Calorie Breakdown | Body Benefits |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Apples | 1 medium apple: 81 calories, 0 g fat | An apple's 3 g of fiber help you meet your fiber goal of 20 g to 30 g daily. High-fiber diets can lower heart disease risk. |
| 2. Apricots | 3 apricots: 51 calories, 0 g fat | A good source of beta-carotene (which is converted to vitamin A by the body), providing the equivalent of 35% of the RDA for vitamin A. |
| 3. Bananas | 1 medium: 105 calories, 0 g fat | Bananas are a great source of potassium, which plays a key role in heart health and muscle function. Plus each one has 2 g of fiber. |
| 4. Blackberries | 1 cup: 81 calories, 0 g fat | This fruit boasts a whopping 10 g of fiber in a single cup. |
| 5. Blueberries | 1 cup: 84 calories, 0 g fat | Blueberries help prevent and treat bladder infections by making it hard for bacteria to stick to urinary tract walls. |
| 6. Cantaloupe | 1 cup, cubed: 84 calories, 1 g fat | An antioxidant double whammy, with 68 mg of vitamin C and enough beta-carotene to cover 65% of your daily vitamin A quota. |
| 7. Cherries | 1 cup: 84 calories, 1 g fat | A good source of perillyl alcohol, which helps prevent cancer in animals. Heart-protective anthocyanins give cherries their color. |
| 8. Cranberry juice | 1 cup: 144 calories, 0 g fat | Fights bladder infections in the same way that blueberries do. |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 9. Grapefruit | 1/2 fruit: 39 calories, 0 g fat | A good source of vitamin C and a compound called naringenin, which helps suppress tumors in animals |
| 10. Purple grapes and juice | 1 cup seedless: 113 calories, 9 g fat | Offers three heart-guarding compounds: flavonoids, anthocyanins, and resveratrol. (Sorry, green grapes are not rich in them.) |
| 11. Kiwi fruit | 1 medium kiwi: 46 calories, 0 g fat | Just one little fruit packs a mean vitamin-C punch (74 mg) and an impressive 2.8 g fiber. |
| 12. Mangoes | 1 mango: 135 calories, 1 g fat | A single mango has enough beta-carotene to cover your RDA for vitamin A while racking up 57 mg of vitamin C. |
| 13. Oranges | 1 orange: 61 calories, 0 g fat | One orange provides an impressive 50 g to 70 g of vitamin C, 40 mcg of folic acid, and 52 mg of calcium. |
| 14. Orange juice | 1 cup: 112 calories, 0 g fat | One of the richest sources of folic acid: A cup provides one-quarter of the 400 mcg RDA for folic acid and boasts 96 mg of vitamin C. |
| 15. Calcium-enriched orange juice | 1 cup (from concentrated): 122 calories, 0 g fat | Drinking this beverage is a healthful way to make a 300- to 350-mg dent in your daily 1,500-mg calcium requirement. |
| 16. Papayas | 1 cup, cubed: 55 calories, 0 g fat | Loaded with vitamin C (86 mg per cup), a healthy does of fiber (2.5 g) and a sprinkling of beta-carotene and calcium. |
| 17. Prunes | 1/3 cup, stewed: 87 calories, 0 g fat | Prunes, famed laxative effect is no mystery: There are 5 g of fiber (both soluble and insoluble) in just 1/3 cup. |
| 18. Raspberries | 1 cup: 60 calories, 0 g fat | Teeming with 8 g of fiber per cup, they also boast vitamin C, ellagic acid, and anthocyanins. |
| 19. Red grapefruit | 1/2 fruit: 37 calories, 0 g fat | All the goodies of white grapefruit and more: They provide up to 100% of the RDA for vitamin A and are also high in lycopene. |
| 20. Strawberries | 1 cup, sliced: 50 calories, | Strawberries have high levels of ellagic acid and anthocyanins, and are rich in vitamin C (95 mg |

| | | |
|----------------------|---|--|
| | 0 g fat | per cup) and fiber (3.8 per cup). |
| 21. Artichokes | 1 medium: 60 calories, 0 g fat | In addition to their high fiber content (6 g), artichokes contain a flavonoid that has been shown to reduce skin cancer in animals. |
| 22. Arugula | 1 cup: 5 calories, 0 g fat | A cruciferous (cabbage family) veggie, this tangy green contains cancer-preventative compounds such as isothiocyanates. |
| 23. Avocado | 1/2 avocado: 170 calories, 13 g fat | Yes, they're high in fat, but fortunately half of it is the heart-healthy monounsaturated variety. And they're a good source of vitamin E. |
| 24. Beets | 1/2 cup, sliced: 37 calories, 0 g fat | Beta-cyanin, which gives beets their reddish-purple color, is a disease-fighting antioxidant. |
| 25. Bok choy | 1 cup, cooked: 20 calories, 0 g fat | This staple of Chinese cuisine contains isothiocyanates, plus lots of calcium (158 mg per cup) and vitamin C (44 mg per cup). |
| 26. Broccoli | 1 cup, cooked: 44 calories, 0 g fat | This superfood is loaded with sulphoraphane. Then there's the 72 mg of calcium, 78 mcg of folic acid, and all the vitamin C. |
| 27. Broccoli sprouts | 1/2 cup: 10 calories, 0 g fat | As protective as broccoli is, these little sprouts may be even better. They're sprouting up in health-food stores and supermarkets. |
| 28. Brussels sprouts | 1/2 cup, cooked: 30 calories, 0 g fat | Along with good-for-you isothiocyanates and idoles, these vegetables give you an impressive 48 mg of vitamin C. |
| 29. Cabbage | 1 cup, raw, chopped: 22 calories, 0 g fat | The indoles in cabbage help make it a cancer fighter. For a healthy coleslaw, top shredded raw cabbage with low-fat dressing. |
| 30. Cauliflower | 1 cup, raw: 24 calories, 0 g fat | Another great source of indoles; plus it's high in fiber (2.5 per cup) and vitamin C (72 mg per cup). |
| 31. Carrots | 1 medium: 32 calories, 0 g fat | A stellar source of beta-carotene. One carrot contains twice the RDA for vitamin A. Cooked carrots are even healthier than raw. |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| 32. Celery | 2 medium stalks: 13 calories, 0 g fat | Celery doesn't get much hype, but it's got the goods--namely phthalides, compounds that lower blood pressure and cholesterol. |
| 33. Garlic | 1 clove: 5 calories, 0 g fat | Raw, cooked, or granulated: all forms contain carotenoids, including beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin. |
| 34. Green Beans | 1 cup, cooked: 43 calories, 0 g fat | Green beans carry a variety of antioxidant carotenoids, including beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin. |
| 35. Green pepper | 1 medium: 32 calories, 0 g fat | One of the more vitamin C-rich vegetables--66mg per pepper--and it's got a little capsaicin, too (see peppers, below). |
| 36. to 39. Greens (Collard, kale, mustard, turnip) | 1 cup, cooked: 67 calories, 0 g fat | These greens are packed with disease fighters: lutein, zeaxanthin, and isothiocyanates, and 93 to 226 mg of calcium per cup. |
| 40. Onions | 1/2 cup, chopped: 29 to 49 calories, 0 to 1 g fat | They're important suppliers of the same heart-healthy organosulphur compounds that are found in garlic. |
| 41. Peas | 1/2 cup, cooked: 67 calories, 0 g fat | A good source of the carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin--both of which help protect against age-related eye disease. |
| 42. Peppers (hot) | 1 pepper: 18 calories, 0 g fat | Their phytochemical claim to fame is capsaicin, which helps short-circuit the cancer process. |
| 43. Potato (white) | 1 7-oz. potato: 220 calories, 0 g fat | Don't peel it, and you get a generous 5 g of fiber, 43% of the day's vitamin C requirement, and a major dose of potassium. |
| 44. Pumpkin | 1/2 cup, canned: 41 calories, 0 g fat | Gives you three times the RDA for vitamin A and 3.5 g of fiber. Use canned pumpkin to make pumpkin bread, risotto, and soup. |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| 45. Radishes | 4 radishes: 4 calories, 0 g fat | The beginning of the bite is cool, but soon things get hot; chewing activates the veggies' indoles and isothiocyanates. |
| 46. Romaine and other dark lettuces | 2 cups, shredded: 18 calories, 0 g fat | The darker the green, the more carotenoids. These lettuces are also high in folic acid: There's 40% of the RDA in 2 cups of romaine. |
| 47. Red peppers (sweet) | 1 pepper: 32 calories, 0 g fat | An improved version of the already top-notch green pepper, with twice its vitamin C content and a day's supply of vitamin A. |
| 48. Seaweed | 1 cup: 32 calories, 0 g fat | Seaweed is carotenoid-and calcium-rich and has a delicate taste. |
| 49. Spinach | 1 cup, cooked: 41 calories, 0 g fat | Offers enough beta-carotene to surpass the RDA for vitamin A, a ton of lutein, and more than half the RDA for folic acid. |
| 50. Squash (winter types, butternut) | 1 cup, cooked: 82 calories, 0 g fat | Not only does a cup equip you with three day's worth of vitamin A, it also fulfills nearly 10% of your daily calcium needs. |
| 51. Tomatoes | 1 tomato: 26 calories, 0 g fat | Technically considered a fruit, tomatoes are loaded with cancer-fighting lycopene and are great sources of vitamin C. |
| 52. Turnips | 1 cup, cooked, cubed: 32 calories, 0 g fat | Neglected members of the cruciferous family, turnips provide both indoles and isothiocyanates and 3 g of fiber. |
| 53. Watercress | 2 cups: 8 calories, 0 g fat | One of its compounds detoxifies a major carcinogen in tobacco and as such may help prevent lung cancer. Also contains carotenoids. |
| 54. Yams and sweet potatoes | 1/2 cup, mashed: 103 calories, 0 g fat | They win the carotenoid prize, with astonishing levels amounting to six times the RDA for vitamin A. |
| 55. Chives | 1 tbsp.: 1 calorie, 0 g fat | A member of the same family as garlic, chives contain cholesterol-lowering organosulfides. |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| 56. Cinnamon | 1/2 tsp.: 3 calories, 0 g fat | Recent research found that 1/4 tsp. to 1 tsp. of cinnamon daily improves insulin function and, in turn, blood-sugar control. |
| 57. Ginger | 5 1-in. slices: 8 calories, 0 g fat | Helps quell nausea and may reduce joint inflammation in diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis. |
| 58. Horseradish | 1 tsp. prepared horseradish: 2 calories, 0 g fat | Whether it's fresh, jarred, or in the sharp green wasabi served with sushi, horseradish is infused with anticancer isothiocyanates. |
| 59. Mint | 2 tbsp.: 5 calories, 0 g fat | Spearmint, the type normally found in the fresh herb section of your grocery, is rich in covone, an antioxidant and anticarcinogen. |
| 60. Mustard | 1/2 tsp. mustard seed: 8 calories, 0 g fat | Both prepared yellow mustard and mustard seed contain health-protective isothiocyanates. |
| 61. Parsley | 2 tbsp., chopped: 3 calories, 0 g fat | Parsley is a great source of several carotenoids: beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin. Try it in tabbouleh. |
| 62. Rosemary | 1/2 tsp., dried or 1 tsp fresh: 1 calorie, 0 g | Test-tube studies found that carnosol, a compound in rosemary, thwarts the action of carcinogens. |
| 63. Sage | 1/2 tsp., ground: 1 calorie, 0 g fat | Contains a variety of monoterpenes, substances that prevent the spread and progression of tumors. |
| 64. Tea (black or green) | 1 cup: 2 calories, 0 g fat | Tea (regular and decaf) and its antioxidant catechins are linked to reduced heart-disease risk. Tea may also help inhibit cancer. |
| 65. Turmeric (Used in Curry Spice) | 1/2 tsp.: 4 calories, 0 g fat | This spice gets its yellow color from compounds called curcumins, which have reduced the size of tumors in animals 50%. |
| 66. Beans (kidney, black, navy) | 1 cup, cooked: 220 to 270 calories, 0 g fat | A super rich fiber source, ranging from 6 g to 16 g per cup, depending on the variety. Also high in iron. |
| 67. Soy milk | 1 cup: 81 calories, 4 g | A cup has 20 mg to 25 mg of health-promoting isoflavones. |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| | fat | |
| 68. Soy protein isolate powder | 1 oz.: 95 calories, 1 g fat | Studies show that it takes 25 g of soy protein daily (the amount in just 1 1/4 oz. to 3 oz. of the powder, depending on the brand) to get a 10% drop in cholesterol. Try blending it in a smoothie. |
| 69. Tofu | 1/2 cup: 97 calories, 6 g fat | A rich source of isoflavones. Studies indicate that 90 mg of isoflavones daily improves bone density; 1/2 cup of tofu has 30 g. |
| 70. Textured vegetable protein | 1/2 cup, rehydrated: 60 calories, 0 g fat | This is the stuff that mimics meat in vegetarian chili. TVP is one of the richest sources of isoflavones, at 40 mg per 1/2 cup. |
| 71. Cheese (full fat) | 1 oz: 70 to 110 calories, 6g to 9 g fat | One ounce packs 210 mg of calcium and a dose of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA). It's high in saturated fat; eat with low-fat foods. |
| 72. Skim milk | 1 cup: 90 calories, 0 g fat | Our calcium lifeline at 300 mg per cup, and one of the few dietary sources of vitamin D, which is vital to calcium metabolism. |
| 73. Yogurt (plain low-fat or nonfat) | 1 cup low-fat: 150 calories, 3.5 g fat | Those friendly bacteria (called probiotics) in yogurt help boost immunity and prevent yeast infections. |
| 74. Beef | 3 oz., cooked: 150 to 280 calories, 5 g to 20g fat | Beef is a good source of both CLA and iron, but since it's also high in saturated fat, have it no more than three times a week. |
| 75. Chicken (without skin) | 3 oz., cooked: 162 calories, 6 g fat | Remove the skin and you've got an excellent, low-fat source of protein. And 3 oz. provides 38% of the RDA for the B vitamin niacin. |
| 76. Lamb | 3 oz., cooked, trimmed of fat: 175 calories, 8 g fat | Lamb, like beef, is also a good source of CLA. Ditto beef's saturated fat warning and weekly consumption recommendation. |
| 77. Lean Pork | 3 oz., cooked, trimmed of fat: 140 calories, 4 g fat | Fat-trimmed pork tenderloin has one-third less fat than even lean beef. And it boasts 71% of the RDA for thiamine. |
| 78. Fatty Fish (salmon, | 3 oz., cooked: 155 to 225 calories, 5 g | The richest source of the heart-protective omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA, considered the most potent. |

| | | |
|----------------------|--|---|
| mackerel) | to 15 g fat | |
| 79. Other Fish | 3 oz., cooked: about 100 calories, 1 g fat | Omega-3s comprise the little bit of fat found in fish, plus fish are a good source of selenium, which is essential for immunity. |
| 80. Lobster | 3oz., cooked: 122 calories, 2 g fat | Try lemon juice instead of butter and you've got a virtually fat-free way to meet your daily selenium and copper requirements. |
| 81. Mussels | 3 oz, cooked: 146 calories, 4 g fat | Mussels have two to three times as much iron as a burger, and completely cover you for selenium. |
| 82. Oysters, eastern | 6 medium, steamed (1 1/2 oz): 58 calories, 2 g fat | Just six oysters give you nearly five times the RDA for zinc, which is critical for immune function. |
| 83. Almonds | 1/2 oz (11 nuts): 83 calories, 7 g fat | A recent study showed that a daily 3 1/2-oz. serving of almonds can lower LDL cholesterol 14%. |
| 84. Brazil nuts | 1/2 oz. (3 to 4 nuts): 93 calories, 9 g fat | Just three to four nuts deliver an astronomical 420 mcg of selenium, eight times the recommended daily amount. |
| 85. Peanut butter | 2 tbsp.: 200 calories, 16 g fat | Eating five ounces of nuts weekly reduces heart-disease risk. Buy peanut butter without partially hydrogenated oils. |
| 86. Sunflower seeds | 1/4 cup: 205 calories, 18 g fat | One of the richest sources of vitamin E (besides oils), with an impressive 6 IUs in just 1/4 cup. |
| 87. Tahini | 1 tbsp.: 89 calories, 8 g fat | Amazingly, 1 tbsp. of the stuff has got 64 mg of calcium, 1.3 mg of iron, and nearly 1 mg of zinc. And it's a good source of protein. |
| 88. Walnuts | 1 oz. (14 halves): 182 calories, 17 g fat | Walnuts are exceptionally rich in an omega-3 fatty acid called alpha-linolenic acid, which helps protect against heart disease. |
| 89. Canola oil | 1 tbsp.: 124 calories, 14 g fat | The only cooking oil that's rich in the two healthiest fats: monounsaturated and omega-3's. It's a good all-purpose oil. |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 90. Flaxseed oil | 1 tbsp.:124 calories, 14 g fat | It's rich in the vegetarian form of omega-3 fatty acids. Mix with balsamic vinegar for a tasty salad dressing. |
| 91. Olive oil | 1 tbsp.: 120 calories, 14 g fat | Besides its extremely high monounsaturated fat content, olive oil also contains a heart-healthy compound called squalene. |
| 92. Barley | 1/2 cup, cooked: 97 calories, 0 g fat | Barley is a great source of a soluble fiber called beta-glucan (also found in oats, below), which helps lower blood cholesterol. |
| 93. Bran cereal | Varies by brand. 1/2 cup: 80 calories, 1 g fat | The easiest way to make inroads into that 20- to 30-g fiber recommendation. These cereals range from 2 g to 9 g of fiber per serving. |
| 94. Flaxseed | 1 tbsp seeds: 60 calories, 4 g fat | One of the richest sources of health-protective lignans and a good source of omega-3 fatty acids. |
| 95. Oats and oat bran | 1 cup: 88 calories, 2 g fat | Studies show that a cup of cooked oat bran or 1 1/2 cups oatmeal daily lowers cholesterol 5%. |
| 96. Rye crackers | 1 4 1/2in. x 2 1/2in. cracker (.5oz): 37 calories, 0 g fat | Rye crackers are one of the few foods containing rye bran. The bran has lignans and 2.5 g of fiber per 1/2 oz. of cracker. |
| 97. Wheat germ | 1/4 cup wheat germ: 103 calories, 4 g fat | Wheat germ is rich in fiber, provides your daily selenium dose, and is one of the few foods rich in vitamin E (7 IU of E per 1/4 cup). |
| 98. Whole grains such as bulgar | 1 cup, cooked: 150 to 220 calories, 0 g to 2 g fat | Besides the lignans and vitamins, these grains supply complex carbs that mete out a slow, even supply of energy all day long. |
| 99. 100% whole wheat bread | 2 slices: 138 calories, 2 g fat | Each slice of 100% whole wheat bread has 1.5 g of fiber, plus other nutrients. Forget regular "wheat" bread. |
| 100. Whole | 1 cup, | It's got all the nutrients of whole wheat bread, |

| | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| wheat pasta | cooked: 174 calories, 1 g fat | and is a great source of selenium as well. |
|-------------|---|--|

Brought to you by ReadersDigestHealth from the May 1999 issue of *American Health*.
Copyright © 1999 RD Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized use is strictly prohibited.