

Foods That Heal

Poor nutrition is often the reason people get sick. Here are 10 foods you need to add to your diet.

Have you ever seen the television program *What Not to Wear*? In it, a crew of hip makeover artists helps a poorly dressed person learn how to dress well. The show ends with the transformed person being showcased to his or her friends and family at a party. The before and after views of the person are often shockingly different.

Here's my point: You "wear" your food on your body every day. You really are what you eat. Your clothes may be made of cotton, polyester, rayon or silk, but your body is made up of whatever you put in your mouth. It's time to make over your pantry and fridge with living foods—foods that are as close to their natural state as possible—not only so you can look your best but also so you can avoid the diseases that a poor diet can lead to.

Most of us eat what has been called the "standard American diet"—food replete with unhealthy fat, sugar and highly refined wheat products. But we didn't always eat this way.

Former generations were some of the healthiest on the planet. As part of an agrarian culture, many of our grandparents lived closer to the land. Today our lifestyle is too fast-paced for us to do that, and as a result, our diet suffers.

To live healthier, longer lives, we must ignore much of what we have been taught about food. Food is meant to be enjoyed, but when our dietary choices, which should nourish and sustain our bodies, begin to make us ill instead, then we must be willing to change our ideas about what is good for us and revise our eating habits accordingly.

Try replacing some of the processed foods you eat with these

living foods:

1. Blueberries. Blueberries contain polyphenols that protect the brain from inflammation and oxidative stress, which in turn may protect the brain from the degenerative effects of aging and from injury from ischemic stroke. Blueberries may even help prevent Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. When rats suffering from Alzheimer's-like symptoms were supplemented with blueberries in their diets, they were able to perform normally on tests involving memory and motor behavior. I recommend a serving of organic blueberries every day.

2. Pomegranates. Research continually shows the benefits of pomegranate—one of the world's richest sources of antioxidants. Pomegranate protects your heart by protecting arterial walls and improving blood flow to the heart. Studies also show that pomegranate helps arm your body against cardiovascular disease inhibiting the oxidation of LDL (bad) cholesterol.

3. Acai berries. The acai berry is gaining in popularity daily, largely because word is spreading that it is rich in antioxidants such as vitamin A, vitamin C and calcium. It is also a good source of omega-3s, fiber, protein, carbohydrates and minerals. But topping the headlines is a report published in the *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry* in 2007, which stated that of all fruits and vegetables tested to date, freeze-dried acai, had the highest activity against superoxide—a compound containing the negative free radical O_2^- —in the superoxide scavenging (SOD) assay.

4. Broccoli sprouts. In 1997, scientists from Johns Hopkins discovered that 3-day-old broccoli sprouts, which look and taste similar to alfalfa sprouts, contain 20 to 50 times the amount of sulforaphane found in mature broccoli. Sulforaphane is a compound discovered in 1992 that helps your body arm itself against cancer. It has been suggested that eating a few tablespoons of sprouts a day can provide your body with the

same amount of chemoprotection as eating one to two pounds of broccoli a week. For this reason, I've started growing my own broccoli sprouts at home, and I recommend this practice to my patients as well. You can find sprouting kits at most health- or natural-food stores, or you can order them online.

5. Sprouted breads. One living-foods staple is fiber-rich, living grain products such as whole-grain breads, pastas and cereal. But I encourage you to go one step further than whole-grain breads and eat *sprouted* breads and flat breads. Ezekiel brand bread and manna bread are both terrific flourless breads made from live, sprouted grains. Sprouted-grain products do spoil more quickly, especially if you leave them out, unrefrigerated, but that simply means they aren't loaded with preservatives. The food that God gave the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness—manna—bred worms after just one day. Spoiling quickly is characteristic of live food.

6. Olive oil. Believe it or not, there is such a thing as *good* fat. Your body needs fat! The good types of fat heal the body. You should eat fat every day for the health of your heart, brain, skin, hair and every part of you. Good fat, which includes monounsaturated fat, nourishes and strengthens cell membranes. Monounsaturated fat is found in extra-virgin or virgin olive oil that is cold-pressed (not heated). You can also get monounsaturated fats in natural organic peanut butter, avocados, olives, macadamia nuts, and especially almonds, walnuts and hazelnuts.

7. Almonds. Raw nuts and seeds—not the roasted, salted, flavored and candied kind—should be a mainstay of your diet. I enjoy almonds, macadamia nuts and walnuts. Almonds are excellent because they are high in monounsaturated fats and contain about 20 percent protein. Try almond butter. Also, remember to keep nuts in #1 PETE plastic or ceramic containers, and place them in the refrigerator or freezer until you are ready to use them so they don't become rancid.

8. Fiber. Most Americans eat an estimated 12 grams or less of fiber daily. But the recommended goal is 25 to 30 grams a day. Dietary fiber is simply nondigestible polysaccharides, which are found in plant cell walls. Many people get fiber from whole-grain cereals, nuts, seeds, dried beans, fruits and vegetables. Generally, the higher the fiber content of your foods, the better.

9. Wild salmon. Wild salmon is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are found mainly in cold-water fish, some marine mammals and algae. Scientists believe the best way to obtain adequate omega-3 is through direct consumption of DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) from fish. DHA protects the brain, reversing signs of brain aging and protecting against development of Alzheimer's and dementia. DHA also plays a role in preventing ADHD as well as impaired learning. EPA protects the heart and decreases inflammation. It has anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory and anti-hypertensive effects. EPA reduces the risk of stroke, heart arrhythmias, dementia and heart attack. I recommend eating only wild Pacific or Alaskan salmon, not the farmed variety.

10. Lean, free-range meat. Limit your intake of meat and dairy products that have been chemically exposed. Because an animal's body will store pesticides and other chemicals in its fatty tissues, the riskiest foods are fatty cuts of meat. Switch to a leaner cut of meat, and eat free-range or organic meats from cattle grazed on lands that have not been sprayed with pesticides. Free-range organic chicken and turkey are also, for the most part, pesticide- and hormone-free

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