

# What are the Top 12 Superfoods?

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## Leafy Greens

Dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale, and salad greens are sources of many health-promoting phytochemicals and nutrients. Phytochemicals are compounds found in plants that help fight diseases. The nutrients and phytochemicals in dark green leafy vegetables may help:

- Protect cells and block early stages of cancer
- Promote heart health
- Prevent certain birth defects
- Protect against thinning bones
- Lower risk of stomach, breast, and skin cancer



## Berries

Berries are among the healthiest fruits partly because of their dark colors. They have almost 10 times as many antioxidants as other fruits and vegetables. A study of nearly 100,000 people found that those who ate the most berries were significantly less likely to die of cardiovascular disease. Berries boost your levels of a type of white blood cell that helps your immune system fight diseases. Berries may also reduce and repair cell damage as well as slow cognitive decline.



## Legumes

Legumes include beans, lentils, split peas, green peas, and peanuts. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend people eat one to three cups weekly. Legumes are rich in protein and fiber. They provide a variety of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. Eating a diet high in legumes has been associated with:

- Better control of blood sugar
- Fewer chronic diseases overall
- Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease
- Reduced risk of colorectal cancer
- Lower bad cholesterol
- Weight control
- Longer lifespan



## Green Tea

Green tea contains polyphenols, beneficial plant compounds that are also found in dark berries, vegetables, chocolate, and red wine. Drinking green tea may help:

- Prevent colon, rectal, and pancreatic cancer
- Improve outcomes in breast and prostate cancer
- Lower bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol
- Burn fat at a faster rate



## Nuts and Seeds

Eat nuts and seeds regularly to help control your weight and protect against chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Nuts and seeds are:

- Rich in protein, healthy fats, and fiber
- Low in saturated fats
- Cholesterol free
- Rich in phytochemicals that are antioxidants
- Rich in vitamins and minerals



## Turmeric

Turmeric is a plant in the ginger family that is a key ingredient in curry powder. It has been used medicinally for thousands of years. Turmeric contains curcumin, which gives it its bright yellow color. Many studies suggest curcumin may help prevent and fight cancer. It may also play a role in preventing or fighting other disorders, including:

- Lung disease
- Brain disease
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Osteoarthritis
- Lupus



## Avocado

Avocados are rich in healthy fats and fiber, which can help you feel full longer. Because of their healthy fat content, they can help you absorb fat-soluble vitamins. They're also high in nutrients, including:

- Riboflavin (Vitamin B2)
- Niacin (Vitamin B3)
- Pantothenic Acid (Vitamin B5)
- Pyridoxine (Vitamin B6)
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin E
- Vitamin K
- Folate
- Magnesium
- Potassium



## Mushrooms

Mushrooms have been used as medicine by many cultures around the world. Mushroom compounds may have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anti-cancer benefits. Studies have shown that mushrooms can stimulate the activity of immune cells and macrophages. These help stop the growth and spread of tumor cells and kill existing tumor cells.

Mushrooms have been associated with protection against dementia and cognitive decline. They also act as a prebiotic, and help beneficial gut bacteria form.



## Whole Grains

Whole grains contain all parts of the grain, including the bran, endosperm, and germ. Refined grains have had the bran and germ removed. The bran is rich in fiber and contains nutrients and phytochemicals. The germ contains healthy fats, E and B vitamins, and phytochemicals. Whole grains may help:

- Maintain a steady blood sugar
- Lower cholesterol
- Move food through your digestive tract
- Prevent small clots that cause heart attacks and strokes
- Fight some types of cancer



## Cauliflower

Cauliflower is a member of the cruciferous vegetable family, along with other cabbage-related vegetables. The phytochemicals in cruciferous vegetables may:

- Inactivate substances that cause cancer
- Protect cells from DNA damage
- Have antiviral and antibiotic effects
- Have anti-inflammatory effects
- Cause the death of cancer cells
- Inhibit tumor formation and growth



## Tomatoes

Tomatoes are low in calories and have lots of nutrients and phytochemicals, including lycopene, a carotenoid. A diet rich in tomatoes has been associated with:

- Reduced inflammation associated with chronic disease
- Lowered risk of cardiovascular disease
- Improved cholesterol
- Protection from sunburn



## Pumpkin

Pumpkin isn't just for jack o'lanterns. This superfood has a lot of health benefits. Don't throw out the seeds when you cook one, because they have benefits, too. Pumpkin is:

- High in fiber
- A good source of vitamin A
- Low in calories

Pumpkin seeds contain tryptophan, which may help your body produce serotonin for better sleep. They're also a good source of beta carotene, an antioxidant that can help protect against cancer, fight inflammation, and even make your skin look better.



## Sources:

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