

Celestial Healing's

24 Health Items and Their Benefits

By

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Health Benefits of Almonds



These energy-rich snacks lower bad cholesterol, thanks to plant sterols, and benefit diabetics by lowering blood sugar. They're also rich in amino acids, which bolster testosterone levels and muscle growth. Almonds are also stuffed with vitamin E, which helps defend against sun damage. In a study, volunteers who consumed 14 milligrams of the vitamin (about 20 almonds) per day and then were exposed to UV light burned less than those who took none. And because vitamin E is an antioxidant, it also works to keep your arteries free of dangerous free radicals. Low levels of vitamin E are also associated with poor memory performance and cognitive decline, says dietitian Sari Greaves of New York Presbyterian Hospital–Cornell.

Turmeric



Curcumin, the polyphenol that gives turmeric its tang and yellow hue, has anticancer properties, anti-inflammatory effects, and tumor-fighting activities known in nutrition speak as anti-angiogenesis. Researchers at UCLA have also found that it helps deter the accumulation of amyloid plaques in the brain, tiny blockages that may cause Alzheimer's disease. Turmeric's prevalence in India, the researchers suggest, may help explain why so few of the country's senior citizens have the disease, whereas the statistic is close to 13 percent in the United States, according to the Alzheimer's Association. One tip: Pair it with pepper in curries. "Adding black pepper to turmeric or turmeric-spiced food enhances curcumin's bioavailability by 1,000 times, due to black pepper's hot property called piperine," says nutritionist Stacy Kennedy of the Dana Farber Cancer Institute.

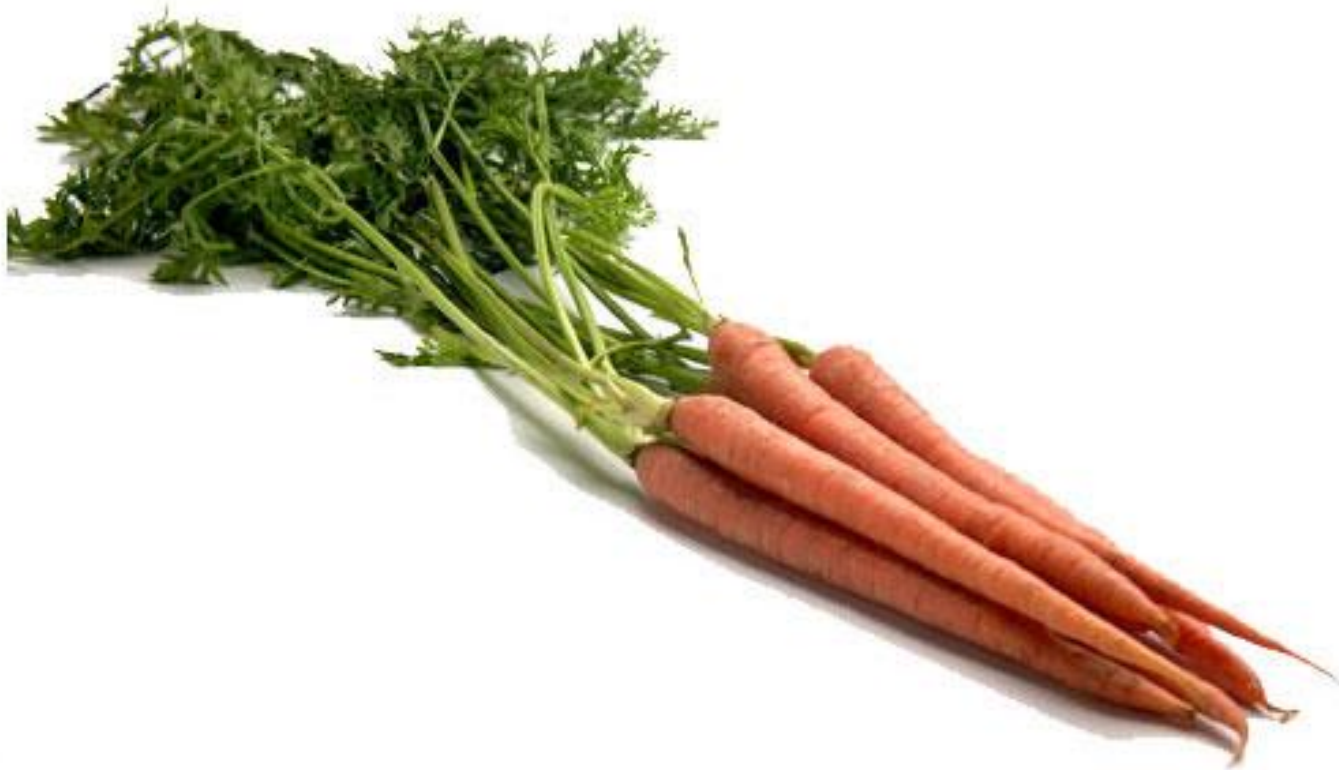
Flaxseeds



Rich in protein and fiber, these little seeds offer a payload of omega-3 fatty acids, which erase spots and iron out fine lines in the skin. *The British Journal of Nutrition* reported that participants in one study who downed about half a teaspoon of omega-3s daily in 6 weeks experienced significantly less irritation and redness, along with better-hydrated skin. A recent study of people with high cholesterol (greater than 240 mg/dL) compared statin treatment with eating 20 grams of flaxseed a day. After 60 days, those eating flaxseed did just as well as those on statins. Try sprinkling ground flaxseed on oatmeal, yogurt, and salads.

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Carrots



Think of carrots as orange wonder wands— good for the eyeballs, and good for clearing up breakouts. No magic here, though, just plenty of vitamin A, which prevents overproduction of cells in the skin's outer layer. That means fewer dead cells to combine with sebum and clog pores. They're also spiked with carotenoids— fat-soluble compounds that are associated with a reduction in a wide range of cancers, as well as a reduced risk and severity of inflammatory conditions such as asthma and rheumatoid arthritis.

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Black Beans



People who eat one 3-ounce serving of black beans a day decrease their risk of heart attack by 38 percent, according to a study in the *Journal of Nutrition*. And while other beans are also good for your heart, none can boost your brainpower like black beans. That's because they're full of anthocyanins, antioxidant compounds that have been shown to improve brain function. They're also packed with superstar nutrients, including protein, healthy fats, folate, magnesium, B vitamins, potassium, and fiber.

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Cinnamon



Known for making desserts sweet and Indian food complex, cinnamon is rich in antioxidants that inhibit blood clotting and bacterial growth (including the bad-breath variety). "Studies also suggest that it may help stabilize blood sugar, reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes," says dietitian Nancy Clark, author of *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook*. "What's more, it may help reduce bad cholesterol. Try half a teaspoon a day in yogurt or oatmeal."

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Apples



An apple a day reduces swelling of all kinds, thanks to quercetin, a flavonoid also found in the skin of red onions. Quercetin reduces the risk of allergies, heart attack, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and prostate and lung cancers. If given the choice, opt for Red Delicious. They contain the most inflammation fighting antioxidants.

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Spinach



It may be green and leafy, but spinach—a renowned muscle builder—is also the ultimate man food. The heart-health equivalent of a first ballot Hall of Famer, spinach is replete with the essential minerals potassium and magnesium, and it's one of the top sources of lutein, an antioxidant that may help prevent clogged arteries. Plus its vitamins and nutrients can bolster bone-mineral density, attack prostate cancer cells, reduce the risk of skin tumors, fight colon cancer, and, last but not least, increase blood flow to the penis. "Popeye was on to something," says Susan Bowerman, assistant director of the Center for Human Nutrition at the University of California at Los Angeles.

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Cherries



Cherries are a good source of vitamin C and fibre. The bright red colour of cherries is due to their high concentration of anthocyanins. Cherries also have a very low Glycemic Index (GI).

Anthocyanins can help protect the heart and prevent cardiovascular disease. These powerful antioxidants have been shown to help repair and protect blood vessel walls, thus preventing cholesterol and plaque buildup. In addition, anthocyanins can enhance the effects on vitamin C, which further helps protect blood vessel walls.

In 2007, researchers found that cherry-enriched diets in animals lowered total blood cholesterol levels and reduced triglycerides (fatty acids). They are also excellent in reducing pain and inflammation in addition to preventing gout attacks.

Chia Seeds



Chia is very rich in omega-3 fatty acids, even more so than flax seeds. And it has another advantage over flax: chia is so rich in antioxidants that the seeds don't deteriorate and can be stored for long periods without becoming rancid. Chia seeds also provide fiber (25 grams give you 6.9 grams of fiber) as well as calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, manganese, copper, iron, molybdenum, niacin, and zinc.

Another advantage: when added to water and allowed to sit for 30 minutes, chia forms a gel. Researchers suggest that this reaction also takes place in the stomach, slowing the process by which digestive enzymes break down carbohydrates and convert them into sugar.

Chia has a nutlike flavor. You can mix seeds in water and add lime or lemon juice and sugar to make a drink known in Mexico and Central America as "chia fresca." As with ground flax seeds, you can sprinkle ground or whole chia seeds on cereal, in yogurt or salads, eat them as a snack, or grind them and mix them with flour when making muffins or other baked goods.

Pomegranate



The juice from the biblical fruit of many seeds can reduce your risk of most cancers, thanks to polyphenols called ellagitannins, which give the fruit its color. In fact, a recent study at UCLA found that pomegranate juice slows the growth of prostate cancer cells by a factor of six.

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Sweet Potatoes



Often confused with yams, these tubers are one of the healthiest foods on the planet. In addition to countering the effects of secondhand smoke and preventing diabetes, sweet potatoes contain glutathione, an antioxidant that can enhance nutrient metabolism and immune system health, as well as protect against Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, liver disease, cystic fibrosis, HIV, cancer, heart attack, and stroke. What's more, they're also loaded with vitamin C, which smoothes out wrinkles by stimulating the production of collagen. A recent study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that volunteers who consumed 4 milligrams of C (about half a small sweet potato) daily for 3 years decreased the appearance of wrinkles by 11 percent.

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Avocado



Chock full of monounsaturated fat, avocados deliver a double-barreled blast to LDL cholesterol (the bad kind). They are also rich in folate, a water-soluble B vitamin that helps lower the levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that can hinder the flow of blood through blood vessels. Eat a 1/4 cup twice a week.

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Figs



Packed with potassium, manganese, and antioxidants, this fruit also helps support proper pH levels in the body, making it more difficult for pathogens to invade, says Petersen. Plus, the fiber in figs can lower insulin and blood-sugar levels, reducing the risk of diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Select figs with dark skins (they contain more nutrients) and eat them alone or add them to trail mix.

Cranberries



We know cranberry sauce as a staple at the holidays, but cranberries are a superfood that you should enjoy all year round.

Cranberries have vitamin C and fiber, and are only 45 calories per cup. In disease-fighting antioxidants, cranberries outrank nearly every fruit and vegetable--including strawberries, spinach, broccoli, red grapes, apples, raspberries, and cherries.

One cup of whole cranberries has 8,983 total antioxidant capacity. Only blueberries can top that: Wild varieties have 13,427; cultivated blueberries have 9,019.

Pineapple



With its potent mix of vitamins, antioxidants, and enzymes—in particular, bromelain—pineapple is an all-body anti-inflammation cocktail. It also protects against colon cancer, arthritis, and macular degeneration, says Grieger. (If only the “colada” part of the equation were as healthy.) Have half a cup, two or three times a week.

Black Beans



People who eat one 3-ounce serving of black beans a day decrease their risk of heart attack by 38 percent, according to a study in the *Journal of Nutrition*. *And while other beans are also good* for your heart, none can boost your brainpower like black beans. That's because they're full of anthocyanins, antioxidant compounds that have been shown to improve brain function. They're also packed with superstar nutrients, including protein, healthy fats, folate, magnesium, B vitamins, potassium, and fiber.

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Artichokes



Lauded for centuries as an aphrodisiac, this fiber-rich plant contains more bone-building magnesium and potassium than any other vegetable. Its leaves are also rich in flavonoids and polyphenols—antioxidants that can cut the risk of stroke—and vitamin C, which helps maintain the immune system. “Eat them as often as you can,” says Bowerman. Ripe ones feel heavy for their size and squeak when squeezed.

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Jalapeno



Vitamins

With 109 mg of vitamin C, one jalapeno provides more than a day's worth of this important nutrient. Vitamin C is essential to healthy tissue repair, and it acts as an antioxidant to help with immunity and to fight the effects of aging. One jalapeno also provides 6.4 micrograms of vitamin K and 530 international units of vitamin A. Jalapenos are also a minor source of vitamin E and most of the B complex of vitamins.

Minerals

A jalapeno contains a lot of potassium considering its petite size. In one pepper weighing 45 g you get 153 mg of potassium -- or about 7 percent of the 2,000 mg you need daily. Jalapenos also provide iron, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, copper and manganese. These minerals all play a role in promoting healthy red blood cells, strong bone development and nervous system function.

Antioxidants

Jalapenos provide antioxidants in addition to vitamins C and E. Antioxidants are phytochemicals that can scavenge free radicals in the body that you acquire through exposure to pollutants in the air, food and water. Antioxidants can help prevent the onset of disease. Fresh peppers have greater antioxidant content than canned or jarred versions.

Blueberries



“This potent little fruit can help prevent a range of diseases from cancer to heart disease,” says Ryan Andrews, the director of research at Precision Nutrition, in Toronto, Canada. Think of blueberries as anti-rust for your gray matter, too. Besides being rich in fiber and vitamins A and C, they’re also packed with antioxidants—only açai, an Amazonian berry, contains more— that neutralize the free radicals that cause neuronal misfires. Eat a cup a day, and opt for wild blueberries whenever possible, as they contain 26 percent more antioxidants than cultivated varieties.

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Cucumbers



Cucumbers can relieve acid indigestion and heartburn. They are a good source of dietary fiber. Because it is rich in potassium and magnesium, it may help to lower blood pressure. Studies by DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) show eating cucumbers can help lower blood pressure by 5.5 points in some hypertension prone individuals when coupled with a diet of low starch and lean proteins.

Other studies have shown that cucumbers, when eaten regularly, help to regulate uric acid, so it is great for prevention of certain kidney or bladder stones.

When buying cucumbers, choose the ones that are firm to touch and dark green in color. Do not buy overly matured or yellow colored, as they are prone to contain more insoluble fiber and mature seeds. Go for organically grown cucumbers to get a rich taste full of nutrients.

Kiwi



Kiwi fruits, or kiwi, is an edible berry about the size of a chicken egg. It features a fuzzy peel that surrounds a green fruit with black seeds and a creamy white center. Kiwis taste slightly sweet and tangy with a creamy texture. It is available year-round in most grocery stores and is often eaten alone or as part of a salad, on fruit tarts or in smoothies. In addition to counting as 1/2 cup, or one serving, of kiwis offer a wealth of nutrients.

Eating kiwi fruit is clearly a healthy choice, and it is particularly useful in these cases:

Prevents Asthma

Prevents wheezing and coughing, especially in children

Protects our DNA from mutations

Provides a healthy amount of antioxidants and vitamins

Helps prevent colon cancer thanks to high fiber content

Leeks



29. Leeks

“Leeks can support sexual functioning and reduce the risk of prostate cancer,” says Michael Dansinger, M.D., an assistant professor of medicine and an obesity researcher at Tufts–New England Medical Center, in Boston. “Chop the green part of a medium leek into thin ribbons and add it to soups, sautés, and salads as often as possible.” These scallion like cousins of garlic and onions are also packed with bone-bolstering thiamine, riboflavin, calcium, and potassium, and they’re also rich in folic acid, a B vitamin that studies have shown to lower levels of the artery-damaging amino acid homocystein in the blood.

Broccoli



One cup of broccoli contains a hearty dose of calcium, as well as manganese, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, and iron. And that's in addition to its high concentration of vitamins—including A, C, and K—and the phytonutrient sulforaphane, which studies at Johns Hopkins University suggest has powerful anticancer properties.

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