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# Seven superfoods to help boost immunity

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A healthy immune system begins with what you eat, and adding these ingredients to your diet could do wonders for your health.

## Nuts

Eating a small handful of nuts (at least 20 grams) everyday can cut your risk of premature death by 22 percent, the journal BMC Medicine reported. It said that nuts protect us against the biggest health killers, including heart disease, cancer and diabetes. In addition to being a good source of unsaturated fat, protein and fibre, some nuts, such as walnuts, also offer a plant source of omega-3. However, it's important to stick to a small, unsalted serving everyday to prevent weight gain.

## Superstar veggies

Eating cruciferous vegetables, like broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower, could cut the risk of certain cancers. Research in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition also linked these brassicas with lower odds of heart disease as well as overall longevity. A great source of fibre, vitamins and minerals, they also contain sulphur compounds, which protect cells from damage. However, adding too much vegetables to your diet suddenly could result in bowel problems, so go easy initially.

## Wake up and smell the coffee

Studies show moderate coffee consumption may be linked with a longer life, says UK-based nutritionist Rob Hobson. "Certain substances in coffee, such as chlorogenic acid, are thought to act as antioxidants and free radical scavengers, which reduce inflammation in the body," says Hobson. However, opt for black coffee. If you are using milk, use skimmed rather than full fat milk.

## Go for grains

A study published in JAMA Internal Medicine showed that eating dietary fibre, particularly from grains, could lengthen a person's life. "Fibre remains undigested until it reaches our gut, where it provides food for bacteria that make up our microbiome. Digested by-products help regulate blood sugar levels and cholesterol," says UK-based nutrition counsellor Pixie Turner.

## Bean stalk

The world's longest living people rarely eat meat, less than five times a month. "Their diet is 95 to 100 percent plant-based, and they even substitute beans for meat," says Turner. "Meat free days can help you get more fibre and less saturated fat into your diet. And all of this can potentially reduce your risk of heart disease."

## Turn up the heat

Research from the US discovered that people who regularly eat hot chillies live longer than those who don't like spice at all. As well as having super anti-inflammatory effects, the substance that gives chillies their heat — capsaicin — appears to have a role in boosting heart health and lowering cancer risk too. If you're wary about adjusting the heat levels to suit your tolerance, opt for a good quality chilli paste.

Eating cruciferous vegetables could cut the risk of certain cancers, lower the odds of heart disease, and increase overall longevity

**Berry boost**

Juicy blueberries and strawberries are full of goodness. A British Journal of Nutrition study, which followed thousands of women over decades, found a link between higher intakes of flavonoid-rich foods, such as blueberries and strawberries, with longer lifespans. “Berries freeze well, so in winter, take a handful out of the freezer overnight and add them to your morning cereal,” says London-based nutritionist Emma Thornton. “Or simmer with a bit of water and cinnamon to create a delicious compote”.