- Minerals in the body / Minerals in human nutrition

SCIENCE



What are SUPERFOODS?

How you fuel your body has a direct impact on your health, and some foods are considered far superior to others

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Describing a food as a 'superfood' gives the impression that one berry or legume could be a miracle worker. In reality, we need a combination of lots of healthy foods to keep our bodies functioning optimally. Different items on your plate might be considered 'superfoods' due to high levels of a vital nutrient. This could be considered its power, but a team of food heroes is required to deliver all the nutrients your body needs.

The term superfood doesn't have an official scientific definition – it's a general term for foods with an exceptional nutrient density or wide range of benefits. Often this term will be used on food product packaging to sell particular items or ingredients. Whole foods are the most worthy of the superfood title, being lightly processed or not at all. If a processed product claims to contain a superfood, the benefits of this ingredient are often cancelled out by the added sugar, salt and fat content.

The first food considered a 'superfood' was the banana. During a World War I advertising campaign, the United Fruit Company sold the fruit as a cheap and nutritious option for everyone. Soon after, the American Medical Association released scientific findings linking banana consumption to the relief of diabetes and celiac disease, before the cause of these conditions was better understood. It is true that a diet can work as a lifestyle treatment for some medical conditions, and the term superfood is still used to highlight some of the healthier and nutrient-packed options available.

Did you know?
Ginger can relieve pain and nausea

DID YOU KNOW? Egg antioxidants zeaxanthin and lutein improve eye health

BODY BENEFITS

How can superfoods be chosen to meet specific health goals?



1 BRAIN AND MEMORY

RECOMMENDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS
B_6, B_{12}, Folic Acid

TOP FOODS

2 DIGESTION AND DETOX

RECOMMENDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS
A, B_1, B_3, B_6, B_7, B_{12}, C, D

TOP FOODS

3 REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

RECOMMENDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS
B_6, B_{12}, Folic Acid

TOP FOODS

4 BONE STRENGTH

RECOMMENDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS
D, K_2, Calcium, Magnesium

TOP FOODS

5 EYE FUNCTION

RECOMMENDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS
A, C, E, Lutein, Zinc

TOP FOODS

6 HEART AND BLOOD

RECOMMENDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS
B COMPLEX, D, K, Omega3, CoQ_{10}

TOP FOODS

7 MUSCULAR SYSTEM

RECOMMENDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS
B COMPLEX, C, D, E, Omega3

TOP FOODS

8 ENERGY RELEASE

RECOMMENDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS
B_{12}, Magnesium, CoQ_{10}

TOP FOODS

1 BRAIN AND MEMORY

60 per cent of your brain is made of fat. Fats in nuts and fatty fish help in brain and nerve growth.

2 DIGESTIVE HEALTH

Ginger helps increase movement in digestion while also reducing gas to prevent bloating.

3 REPRODUCTIVE BENEFITS

Green, leafy vegetables contain the B vitamin folate. This vitamin supports healthy cell division in reproduction.

4 STRONG BONES

Sweet potatoes are high in potassium and magnesium. Magnesium helps harden bones, while potassium neutralises acid to prevent calcium leaching from bones.

5 EYE FUNCTION

Nuts and legumes, such as lentils and cashews, have omega-3 to prevent drying eyes and vitamin E to prevent age-related damage.

6 HEALTHY HEART

Beetroots contain high levels of nitrates, which work to dilate blood vessels and keep the heart pumping healthily.

7 MUSCLE MAINTENANCE

Eggs are high in protein, phospholipids, omega-3 fatty acids, cholesterol and vitamin D for muscle building.

8 ENERGY RELEASE

To keep energy levels high for long periods, avocados have potassium and healthy fats.



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SCIENCE



FIVE NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS

KALE
Kale can lower the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

BLUEBERRIES
Blueberries have the most antioxidants of all common fruits and vegetables.

QUINOA
Quinoa contains twice as much protein as white rice.

LIVER
100 grams of beef liver has over 2,000 per cent the daily recommended value of vitamin B12.

SALMON
Salmon's high omega-3 content reduces the risk of heart disease, depression and arthritis.

DID YOU KNOW? B vitamins are water soluble. They can't be stored in the body, so need to be a regular part of your diet

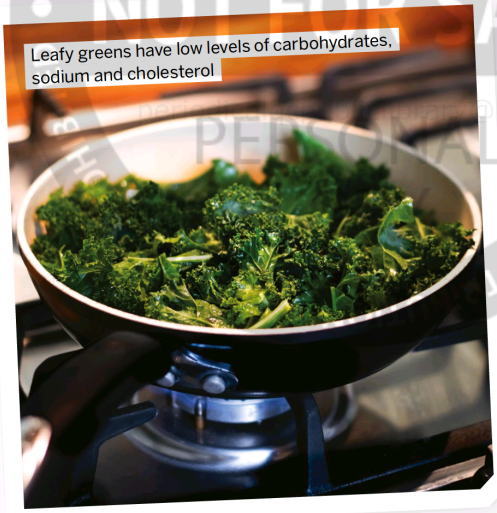


Fermented foods like kimchi are considered superfoods due to the beneficial bacteria, as well as the vitamins and minerals it contains

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES?

Did you know?
Legumes are rich in B vitamins

A diverse diet is key in maintaining health across the body. There are multiple superfood categories serving different biological purposes. The first superfood type is dark-green leafy vegetables, like kale and spinach. These leafy vegetables usually have high levels of calcium, iron, magnesium, vitamin C, fibre, zinc and folate. Many berries are also considered superfoods due to their high antioxidant, vitamin, mineral and fibre content. Berries also reduce the risk of inflammatory and immune conditions. Nuts and seeds are another type of superfood, usually high in protein, fibre and antioxidants, while whole grains, which are those that contain all the germ, endosperm and bran, hold onto all the vitamins and minerals that are usually lost in the refining process.



Leafy greens have low levels of carbohydrates, sodium and cholesterol

COMMON MYTHS

There are many myths surrounding how you should consume superfoods. For example, you might think that because they are so nutritious, you should eat superfoods in large quantities. But eating too much of anything cancels out the positive body response. By consuming too many antioxidants, instead of reducing the risk of disease, an overload can inhibit cells' defence mechanisms. Another common misconception is that superfoods also need to be super expensive. However, many cheaper food items have high nutritional value, from tinned beans packed with protein to tuna, carrots and eggs.



Not all superfoods are consumed as a whole foodstuff – some are taken as supplements

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