

# SUPER FOODS



We have all heard about these things called Super Foods, but what are they? Are they the foods that super heroes eat? Well that actually not so far from the truth. Catherine Saxelby, nutritionist says they are foods that give you 'more bang for your buck' in nutritional terms - they give you more nutrients without a lot of kilojoules.

Ten of the best Super Foods that you should consider incorporating into your daily eating regime are:

## **Oats**

Oats, the superstars of the whole grains are rich in beta glucan soluble fibre and are low GI. They can help lower cholesterol control blood sugar levels and help with satiety (feelings of fullness). They also contain potent phytochemicals, phenolic compounds in outer layer of grain, which act as antioxidants.

## **Yoghurt**

You get a great calcium boost from yoghurt, but it's the probiotics that make it a super food. Probiotics, sometimes referred to as aBc bacteria, are live cultures found in certain yoghurts and there are different types or strains available. Emerging scientific evidence suggests that probiotics offer a host of benefits including promoting gut health, immune protection, cancer risk minimisation, cholesterol lowering as well as helping treat conditions like traveller and toddler diarrhoea and atopic eczema.

## **Blueberries**

These brightly coloured fruits deliver high levels of antioxidants called anthocyanins. Anthocyanins have been shown to lower cholesterol, prevent blood clotting, protect body cells and decrease the effects of brain ageing. That's why they're sometimes referred to as the 'brain berries'.

## **Spinach**

This dark green, leafy vegetable contains a synergy of phyto-nutrients and antioxidants including vitamin K, coenzyme Q10, folate, iron, and the carotenoids - lutein, zeaxanthin. Folate is especially important for women planning pregnancies, heart health and cancer protection. So it's not just Popeye who should be getting his fill.

## **Nuts**

Nuts contain healthy oils, fibre, vitamins and minerals, potent phytochemicals and the amino acid arginine. They're no longer a dieter's foe with research showing that regular nut eaters often maintain a healthy weight. There's also compelling research linking nuts and heart health with findings that a serve of nuts (30-45g), five times a week, may cut the risk of coronary heart disease in half.

## **Soy beans**

These beans are an excellent source of high quality protein, containing twice as much protein as any other legume. The active ingredients are the soy protein and plant phyto-oestrogens (isoflavones) which have positive benefits for heart disease and possibly diabetes control, cancer protection (breast, colon, prostate) and in some cases decreasing certain menopausal symptoms.

## **Tomato**

These vibrant red fruits are packed with the anti-oxidant lycopene. Lycopene offers a host of benefits including heart health and may reduce risk of prostate cancer. Interestingly you can increase the absorption of the lycopene in tomatoes by cooking in a small amount of olive oil. What great news for pasta lovers!

## **Citrus fruits**

The CSIRO's Health Benefits of Citrus Fruits report shows a compelling trend of protection against various types of cancers from eating citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons, limes and grapefruit. The greatest protection is for cancers of the mouth, oesophagus, larynx and stomach where studies showed risk reductions of 40 to 50% by consuming one to two serves of citrus fruit a day.

## **Sardines and oily fish**

This heart-friendly, omega 3 and zinc rich fish, makes a perfect grilled lunch dish. And they're also good news for osteoporosis prevention. Sardines contain edible bones with calcium and significant sources of vitamin D. Sunlight also provides vitamin D to the body, however dietary vitamin D may be more important as we 'slip, slop, slap' to prevent exposure to harmful sunrays.

## **Rosemary and other herbs**

Everybody loves a barbie, but in more recent times concerns have been raised about the potentially cancer causing compounds that are formed when meat is grilled at high temperatures. But maybe Mother Nature is looking out for us? Recent research from Kansas State University has revealed that there may be more to the story of the perfect flavour match of lamb and rosemary. When meat was rubbed with antioxidant extracts of common herbs like rosemary, basil, oregano and thyme, the levels of harmful compounds known as heterocyclic amines (HA) were reduced. This effect was thought to be due to the powerful antioxidants in herbs soaking up these HA free radicals.