



## Super Foods

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At a time when the public has been bombarded with negative aspects of food, it is important to remember that many foods also contain life-enhancing, medicinal benefits. These **Super foods** ("functional foods") provide health benefits far beyond their provision of macro and micronutrients. As a practicing nutritionist for almost 20 years, I am often asked about my own list of super foods. My top ten choices, or the best of the best, include:

1. **Quinoa** is a gluten-free, complete protein, "grain-like" food. It supplies all of the essential amino acids in balance. It also has more fiber and iron than any grain. Grown in the mighty Andes Mountains of South America, quinoa dates back over 5,000 years. The Incas called quinoa, "the Mother grain". It once was the staple food of an ancient civilization stretching from the seacoast of Chile to the snow-capped peaks of the Peruvian Andes.
2. **Cruciferous Vegetables** include high fiber cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, bok choy, and Brussels sprouts. They stimulate the body to produce enzymes for detoxifying cancer-causing chemicals. They have also been shown to modulate estrogen and thyroid metabolism.
3. **Pomegranates** are just beginning to gain popularity in the United States, but have been popular in many other countries since biblical times. An infusion from the root of the pomegranate was used in ancient times to rid the body of tapeworms. Pomegranates are powerful antioxidants that help prevent cancer, heart disease and stroke. Their flavanoids can help alleviate bladder and urinary tract infections. Pomegranate extract has even been shown to block enzymes that contribute to cartilage degradation in osteoarthritis. Pomegranate juice is available in most health food and grocery stores.
4. **Dried beans and peas** include white beans, black beans, garbanzo beans (chick peas), split peas, and soybeans (especially fermented tempeh, tofu, and miso). Their fiber aids elimination, keeps blood sugar stable, benefits the heart, including the lowering of cholesterol. Legumes (beans) are also an inexpensive, lowfat source of plant protein. Beans are a staple in the healthiest countries.
5. **Avocados**, contrary to popular belief, are not fattening. Some of their benefits include raising good (HDL) blood cholesterol, stabilizing blood sugar, and providing glutathione to cleanse the liver. Their naturally occurring lutein helps eyesight, and their potassium and magnesium enhance muscle strength and endurance. Recent animal studies have even shown a protective affect against breast cancer. Their buttery taste and high smoking temperature also make avocado oil great for stovetop cooking.
6. **Onion (Allium) Family** includes onion, garlic, shallot, chive, leek, and asparagus. The entire food family provides anti-microbial benefits. Garlic, in particular, showed its ability to fight the plague, amoebic dysentery, many types of bacteria, fungi, parasites, and viruses even as far back as five thousand years. Garlic can also help lower cholesterol and blood pressure while increasing natural killer cell activity.
7. **Wild Pacific Salmon** is a powerhouse of omega-3 fats, which are proven to help prevent cardiovascular disease and diabetes. The high omega-3 content of wild salmon reduces inflammation anywhere in the body, so can reduce degenerative disease dramatically while reducing pain (especially joint and arthritic pain). Salmon is also an excellent source of calcium, magnesium, and zinc.

8. **Nuts and Seeds** include tree nuts (walnuts, pecans, almonds) and seeds (sesame, sunflower, pumpkin). A daily ounce of any of these can reduce heart disease by up to 50 percent. Nuts and seeds are also a great source of fiber. Flaxseed is unique in that it boasts a high omega-3 fat content, assists the body in converting alpha-linolenic acid into heart and brain healthy DHA, and contains estrogen metabolism and lignan benefits.
9. **Tea**, including black, white, red, and white, has been used over 4,000 years as a medicinal for fighting asthma, bronchitis, infections, and a host of viruses. Its powerful antioxidant effect helps lower blood pressure, keeps arteries clean, retards bone loss, and prevents many types of cancer.
10. **Sea vegetables** contain chlorella, spirulina, and blue-green algae. They have been on our earth for more than two billion years! They boast the most bioavailable sources of complete protein, vitamins and minerals, chlorophyll, DNA and RNA. The amazing benefits of sea vegetables include boosting the immune system, detoxifying heavy metals and pesticides, aiding digestion, speeding up the healing process, alkalizing an acidic system, and fighting bacterial infections. Seaweed, dulse, nori, kelp and other sea vegetables are low calorie food sources that can be added to soups, salads, and sushi or can be consumed by themselves as crispy "chips". The Japanese consume sea vegetables on a regular basis. Could this be why The World Health Organization considers them the healthiest people in the world?

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