

Foods You Should Eat Every Day

Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from Eat This, Not That!
The comprehensive, up-to-date menu and grocery information
from the experts at Men's Health Magazine.



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The purpose of *Eat This, Not That!* is to arm you with information you need to make smart choices when you decide what to eat. But how can you make good nutrition certain? Here's the simple answer: Just eat these eight foods--along with a little protein such as salmon, turkey, or lean beef--every day. We're even supplied some menu ideas, along with some substitutes when you can't find the real thing.

Spinach

It may be green and leafy, but spinach is no nutritional wallflower. This noted muscle builder is a rich source of plant-based omega-3s and folate, which help reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, and osteoporosis. Bonus: Folate also increases blood flow to the nether regions, helping to protect you against age-related sexual issues. And spinach is packed with lutein, a compound that fights macular degeneration. Aim for 1 cup fresh spinach or 1/2 cup cooked per day.

- Substitutes: Kale, bok choy, romaine lettuce
- Recipes: Make your salads with spinach; add spinach to scrambled eggs; drape it over pizza; mix it with marinara sauce and then microwave for an instant dip.

Yogurt

This 2,000-year-old food's health benefits are not disputed: Fermentation spawns hundreds of millions of probiotic organisms that serve as reinforcements to the battalions of beneficial bacteria in your body. That helps boost your immune system and provides protection against cancer. Not all yogurts are probiotic, though, so make sure the label says "live and active cultures." Aim for 1 cup of the calcium and protein-rich goop a day.

- Substitutes: Kefir, soy yogurt
- Recipes: Yogurt topped with blueberries, walnuts, flaxseed, and honey is the ultimate breakfast--or dessert. Plain low-fat yogurt is also a perfect base for creamy salad dressings and dips.

Tomatoes

There are two things you need to know about tomatoes: Red are the best, because they're packed with more of the antioxidant lycopene, and processed tomatoes are just as potent as fresh ones, because it's easier for the body to absorb the lycopene. Studies show that a diet rich in lycopene can decrease your risk of bladder, lung, prostate, skin, and stomach cancers, as well as reduce the risk of coronary artery disease. Aim for 22 mg of lycopene a day, which is about eight red cherry tomatoes or a glass of tomato juice.

- Substitutes: Red watermelon, pink grapefruit, Japanese persimmon, papaya, guava
- Recipes: Pile on the ketchup and Ragú; guzzle low-sodium V8 and gazpacho; double the amount of tomato paste called for in a recipe.

Carrots

Most red, yellow, or orange vegetables and fruits are spiked with carotenoids--fat-soluble compounds that are associated with a reduction in a wide range of cancers, as well as reduced risk and severity of inflammatory conditions such as asthma and rheumatoid arthritis--but none are as easy to prepare, or have as low a caloric density, as carrots. Aim for 1/2 cup a day.

- Substitutes: Sweet potato, pumpkin, butternut squash, yellow bell pepper, mango
- Recipes: Raw baby carrots, sliced raw yellow pepper, butternut squash soup, baked sweet potato, pumpkin pie, mango sorbet, carrot cake

Blueberries

Host to more antioxidants than any other North American fruit, blueberries help prevent cancer, diabetes, and age-related memory changes (hence the nickname ""brain berry""). Studies show that blueberries, which are rich in fiber and vitamins A and C, also boost cardiovascular health. Aim for 1 cup fresh blueberries a day, or 1/2 cup frozen or dried.

- Substitutes: Acai berries, purple grapes, prunes, raisins, strawberries
- Recipes: Blueberries maintain most of their power in dried, frozen, or jam form.

Black Beans

All beans are good for your heart, but none can boost your brain power like black beans. That's because they're full of anthocyanins, antioxidant compounds that have been shown to improve brain function. A daily 1/2-cup serving provides 8 grams of protein and 7.5 grams of fiber. It's also low in calories and free of saturated fat.

- Substitutes: Peas, lentils, and pinto, kidney, fava, and lima beans
- Recipes: Wrap black beans in a breakfast burrito; use both black beans and kidney beans in your chili; puree 1 cup black beans with 1/4 cup olive oil and roasted garlic for a healthy dip; add favas, limas, or peas to pasta dishes.

Walnuts

Richer in heart-healthy omega-3s than salmon, loaded with more anti-inflammatory polyphenols than red wine, and packing half as much muscle-building protein as chicken, the walnut sounds like a Frankenfood, but it grows on trees. Other nuts combine only one or two of these features, not all three. A serving of walnuts--about 1 ounce, or 7 nuts--is good anytime, but especially as a post-workout recovery snack.

- Substitutes: Almonds, peanuts, pistachios, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts
- Recipes: Sprinkle on top of salads; chop and add to pancake batter; spoon peanut butter into curries; grind and mix with olive oil to make a marinade for grilled fish or chicken.

Oats

Oats garnered the FDA's first seal of approval. They are packed with soluble fiber, which lowers the risk of heart disease. Yes, oats are loaded with carbs, but the release of those sugars is slowed by the fiber, and because oats also have 10 grams of protein per 1/2-cup serving, they deliver steady, muscle-friendly energy.

- Substitutes: Quinoa, flaxseed, wild rice

- Recipes: Eat granolas and cereals that have a fiber content of at least 5 grams per serving. Sprinkle 2 Tbsp. ground flaxseed on cereals, salads, and yogurt.