

ALBERT CILIA-VINCENTI

THE SERIES

Healing & Disease Reversal

This series reviews Dean Ornish's evidence-based claims of healing & disease reversal by dietary and lifestyle changes. He is a California University Professor of Medicine in San Francisco. This instalment discusses health benefits of various foods.

The following lists a few examples of the powerful health benefits various foods may bring.

FRUITS

Apples: Their pectin may lower blood cholesterol and help stabilise blood sugar. May also help prevent lung disease, especially in smokers.

Bananas: One of best sources of potassium, which maintains normal blood pressure and heart function. One banana contains around 470mg of potassium and only one milligram of sodium – a banana a day may help prevent high blood pressure and protect against atherosclerosis. Effectiveness of potassium-rich foods in lowering blood pressure has been demonstrated by a number of studies. Men who ate diets rich in potassium, magnesium and fibre, had substantially reduced risk of stroke.

Blueberries: They contain phytochemicals (anthocyanins) that may improve memory and, like **cranberries**, may reduce risk of urinary tract infection by preventing *Escherichia coli* from sticking to the bladder wall.

Grapes, including raisin and wine (in moderation), contain antioxidant polyphenols that help prevent coronary heart disease.

Mangoes: Among the best sources of cancer-fighting carotenoids, but also rich in antioxidant vitamins C and E. One mango contains 7 grams of soluble fibre, which helps lower blood cholesterol.

Oranges: Just one orange supplies 116 percent of daily value for vitamin C, the body's primary water-soluble antioxidant, helping prevent free-radical damage to DNA and cancer-promoting mutations. A good supply of vitamin C is associated with a reduced risk of bowel cancer.

Pomegranates: Their juice is loaded with phytochemicals that may prevent, and even reverse, coronary

heart disease. May also help prevent prostate cancer by reducing DNA damage.

Strawberries: Filled with phytochemicals that reduce risk of diabetes and circulatory problems, and contain phenols that may lower risk of cancer and heart disease.

Tomatoes: Tomato sauce and paste, are rich in lycopene, a powerful antioxidant which may help reduce risk of coronary heart disease, breast, lung and prostate cancer. Cooking tomatoes helps activate the lycopene. They also contain vitamins A, C and E, and potassium.

Watermelon: Contains even more lycopene than tomatoes.

VEGETABLES

Artichokes: Contain silymarin, an antioxidant that helps prevent skin cancer, plus fibre to help control blood cholesterol.

Bell peppers: especially red ones, may boost immunity, and are an excellent source of vitamin C (three times as much as oranges) and of beta-carotene.

Bok choy: (Chinese cabbage): Contains brassinin (may help prevent breast tumours), plus indoles and isothiocyanins which lower oestrogen levels.

Broccoli: High in beta-carotene, fibre and phytochemicals that may detoxify cancer-causing substances. One cup of broccoli contains more vitamin C than one orange.

Carrots: Excellent source of antioxidant compounds and the richest vegetable source of the pro-vitamin A carotenes, which help protect against cardiovascular disease and cancer, and also promote good vision.

Chili peppers: Rich in capsaicin (what makes them hot) which may suppress appetite and help weight loss – possibly also by increasing metabolism. Also contain antioxidants

such as vitamins A and C.

Kale: Contains lutein, an antioxidant that protects against macular degeneration, a leading cause of blindness, and cataracts. Also rich in beta-carotene, vitamins C and E, as well as folate (helps prevent heart disease and birth defects), calcium and magnesium, and some omega-3 fatty acids.

Onions: Rich in quercetin, one of the most powerful flavonoids (plant antioxidants) and may help protect against cancer.

Spinach: Loaded with iron, folate, and two phytochemicals, lutein and beta-carotene, that help prevent macular degeneration. One cup of spinach contains only 40 calories and no fat.

Swiss chard: Contains lutein and magnesium, the latter helps keep nerve and muscle cells healthy.

LEGUMES

Beans, peas, lentils: High in soluble fibre and folic acid, which help lower blood cholesterol and homocysteine levels, reducing risk of heart disease. Also contain protein.

NUTS

Walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts: Good source of vitamin E, antioxidants, protein and monounsaturated fat, which carries lower risk of cardiovascular disease. They are also an excellent source of magnesium, fibre, B vitamins and vitamin E. They are high in monounsaturated fat (and calories), so portion size needs to be watched.

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS RICH FOODS

Cold-water seafood (salmon, mackerel, herring, bluefish, trout, sardines, albacore tuna);

Dark green leafy vegetables (kale, collard greens);

Canola (rapeseed), soybean, flaxseed, walnut oils:

Daily consumption of omega-3 fatty acids may dramatically reduce incidence of sudden cardiac death, reduce triglycerides, lower blood pressure and decrease inflammation, helping arthritis and lupus. When given to pregnant and lactating mothers, they

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may increase a baby's IQ by six points or more and may also reduce incidence of allergic disease in the offspring. They may also reduce depression, attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder, and help prevent dementia. May also reduce risk of prostate and breast cancer.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

Eggs: Egg white is a good source of protein, but the yolk is cholesterol-dense. Where heart disease or high cholesterol is a problem, one should consume only the egg white – two egg whites can substitute one egg in most recipes.

Skimmed milk: A significant source of calcium, vitamin B12 and protein. Its protein helps feeling of satiety till next meal.

Yoghurt: May contain live cultures which help prevent common gastrointestinal problems such as constipation and diarrhoea. Its calcium helps bone health.

SOY PRODUCTS

Tofu, soy milk, etc: Rich in phyto-oestrogens which help prevent breast and prostate cancer, and reduce risk of cardiovascular disease. Rich in protein, niacin, folate, calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium and zinc, and low in saturated fat.

GRAINS

Oats: Contain soluble fibre that may reduce blood cholesterol and blood pressure.

Whole-grain breads, cereals, crackers: These are “good” (complex) carbohydrates because their fibre slows absorption, preventing big blood sugar spikes. Fibre enhances satiation and less calorie consumption – soluble fibre may reduce blood cholesterol, and insoluble fibre prevents constipation and may decrease risk of bowel cancer.

OTHER FOODS

Chocolate: Rich in flavonols and catechins which may improve blood

flow, reduce blood pressure and reduce risk of heart disease. Dark chocolate is better than milk chocolate because of lower sugar and higher flavanol content.

Ginger: Contains gingerol that may lower blood pressure and increase circulation. May also prevent motion and morning sickness and anaesthesia-related nausea. Other compounds in ginger may help ward off migraines and arthritis pain by blocking inflammation-causing prostaglandins.

Black, green, white tea: Contain polyphenols – powerful antioxidants, found more in green and white tea. Contain catechins which may help prevent GI tract cancer by helping prevent DNA damage from carcinogens and by an anti-angiogenic action. May help prevent tooth decay. High content of flavonoids (more in green and white than in black tea) may have many health benefits – have been shown to reduce incidence of coronary heart disease, GI tract cancers and to enhance immune function. S