

# Humble Heroes

## Secret Super-Powers of Everyday Foods



*Super Nutrient!*

Most of the time, we focus too much on the parts of our diets that we need to decrease (sugar, salt...), and we spend too little time thinking about what we need to increase. For most Americans, one thing we need more of is **fiber**.

A diet that's rich in fiber is linked to:

- ✓ better gastrointestinal health and
- ✗ a reduced risk of
  - heart attacks,
  - strokes,
  - obesity,
  - type 2 diabetes, and
  - some types of cancer.

Fiber accomplishes all this by evening out blood sugar levels, lowering cholesterol, and reducing inflammation.

Unfortunately, only about 5% of Americans get the recommended 25-38 grams each day. Our diets have become more and more ultra-processed and that leads to eating less and less fiber. Luckily, just adding "humble heroes" to your meals is an easy, and tasty, way to get more fiber!

There are several broad categories of fibers, and each one has it's own properties and benefits. To learn more about this super-nutrient, visit <https://bit.ly/2Fvjhse>



*Many inexpensive, everyday foods are just as healthy as exotic luxuries.*

It's become common to hear something described as a "superfood." But just what does that mean? Is it a marketing ploy designed to convince us to buy food that's rare, expensive, and shipped from far away? Or is it possible that many of the foods that we already know and love are the real superheroes, hiding right in front of us, ready to come to our aid?

A true superfood has to do more than just be a good source of a few nutrients. Real superfoods must also:

- Be affordable.
- Taste good.
- Be easy to prepare.
- Not go bad before they can be eaten.
- Be environmentally responsible - both to grow and to ship.

While these criteria may eliminate a few flashy foods, they also reveal the stand-out standbys!

Remember: it's a great idea to explore new foods and add variety to your diet. Eating a wide assortment of minimally processed foods is the best way to ensure that you're getting a wide range of nutrients. Instead of focusing on a few superfoods, pay more attention to creating a "super plate" that's brimming with vegetables, whole grains, healthy proteins, and fruit.

For information on the marketing of superfoods, visit <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/superfoods/>.

Flip this page over to learn more about everyday superfoods that are true "humble heroes!"



# 10 Humble Heroes!

## BERRIES

- Blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, and the blueberries that you pick at your secret spot are all great sources of fiber, and their bright colors mean they're also high in anti-oxidants and other disease-fighting elements. Either fresh or frozen is a healthy choice.
- Add to cereal, yogurt, or enjoy a bowl by themselves!



## LEGUMES

- Made up of beans, peas, lentils, and peanuts, members of this huge category are heroes in every way. They are all excellent sources of fiber, folate, and protein.
- Add to almost everything! Toss in salads and soups, blend to make a spread, or grind up to make a burger. Canned or dried, they are inexpensive and nutritious.



## LEAFY GREENS

- While kale seems to be the green-of-the-moment, spinach, chard, collard and mustard greens are great too. They pack a punch with plenty of vitamins A & C, calcium, and fiber.
- Sauté with a little olive oil and garlic; fresh or frozen work well in soups, pasta dishes, or casseroles, or enjoy raw in a salad.



## YOGURT

- A good source of both calcium and protein, yogurt also contains "friendly bacteria" that help your body stay healthy.
- Top with whole-grain cereal or use in place of sour cream or mayonnaise. But beware - flavored yogurts can be loaded with sugar. Best bet: get plain, and then add your own fruit.



## WHOLE GRAINS

- "Whole" grains means that they still have all their fiber. They help lower cholesterol, protect against heart disease and diabetes, and are a good source of B vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients (phyto=plant, nutrient=what builds strong bodies!)
- Make sure the 1st ingredient in your bread is 100% whole grain.



## FISH

- We're fortunate to live where fish is abundant. They're good sources of protein and healthy fats.
- Choose smaller fish that are lower on the food chain more often than bigger, carnivorous fish. For instance, eat lake herring or whitefish more often than northern pike or walleye.



## CRUCIFEROUS VEGGIES

- This large family includes broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kohlrabi, radishes, turnips, and rutabaga. They're all powerful sources of fiber, vitamins, and phytonutrients.
- Sauté with a little olive oil, steam, or stir-fry. Toss some fresh or frozen into soups, pasta recipes, or casseroles.



## NUTS AND SEEDS

- This group includes walnuts, pecans, almonds, hazelnuts, and pumpkin, sesame, or flax seeds. They're chock full of healthy fats and protein.
- Sprinkle on everything from salad to yogurt. Many nuts and seeds also make great spreads that you can use just like you would peanut butter.



## TOMATOES

- Coming in many sizes, shapes, and colors, tomatoes are high in vitamins C, K, and B12. Cooking them (this includes canned tomatoes and those in pasta sauce) makes some of the nutrients more easily absorbed.
- Move beyond raw on salads and sandwiches - canned tomatoes are a tasty addition to pasta, soups, beans, and casseroles.



## OLIVE OIL

- Drizzle a little of this on just about any one of our other humble heroes, and it will be improved, both in taste and nutrition. Olive oil is a good source of healthy fats and vitamin E.
- Use it in place of butter or margarine when cooking and sautéing, and top your vegetable or fruit salads with a splash.

