

Heart Healthy Super Foods

**By Susan
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Almonds. These nuts have heart-healthy nutrients and unsaturated fatty acids. Studies show that almonds may help improve the lining of the arteries and maintain cholesterol levels already within normal limits. Stick to a small handful, though. Almonds are calorie-dense and can lead to weight gain if you overdo it.

Avocado. This fruit has plenty of healthy fats. Avocados have monounsaturated fats, polyunsaturated fats, vitamin E, fiber and folic acid, and avocados contribute nearly 20 vitamins, minerals and nutrients to the diet. Avocados are high in calories, though, so keep an eye on your portions here as well.

Blueberries. Blueberries have an abundance of plant chemicals called anthocyanins that can help maintain a healthy heart. They are a good source of fiber and rank as one of the best sources of antioxidants.

Broccoli. This cruciferous veggie helps support a healthy cardiovascular system. Rich in vitamins C and K, broccoli is also one of the green vegetables that also help maintain a healthy immune system.

Brown rice. When brown rice is stripped and polished to produce "white rice," many of its nutrients are stripped away in the process. Brown rice is only missing its outermost layer and is a more nutritious option than white rice. High in manganese, brown rice provides cell protection, and the bran oil in the grain works to maintain cholesterol and blood pressure levels already within

normal limits.

Cantaloupe. Cantaloupe is a good source of potassium, which helps regulate the body's hydration level and is essential to proper functioning of the cells and organs. What's more, potassium plays an important role in regulating blood pressure already within normal limits.

Carrots. Known as a great source of beta-carotene, carrots are also a source of fiber. Raw carrots have Potassium, Vitamin K, Manganese and Vitamin C, giving the body a healthy dose of nutrition.

Ground flaxseed. Freshly ground flaxseed is a wonderful plant source of ALA Omega-3 fatty acids, healthy fats that can only be obtained from food, as the body cannot produce them on its own. Omega-3 fatty acids work to support normal blood clotting, and they help build cell membranes in the brain.

Oatmeal. A bowl of oatmeal goes a long way in helping maintain cholesterol levels already within normal limits, which in turn helps support a healthy heart and cardiovascular system. A neutral base, oats can be healthied-up even more by tossing in fruit or nuts.

Salmon. This cold-water fish is one of the best sources of Omega-3 fatty acids around, those wonder fats that help maintain blood pressure levels already within normal limits. Eat at least two servings a week and you're covered. If you can, opt for wild salmon over farmed, as they typically have fewer contaminants, including PCBs.