

# Prevention®

## 30 Healing Superfoods

What to Eat for Any Ailment

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## Superfoods for a Healthier Life

Protect yourself from  
10 common health conditions with  
these nutritional powerhouses.

BY KELSEY KLOSS

# 1

## LOWER CHOLESTEROL

### Artichoke

One cooked artichoke has a significant amount of soluble fiber—important for lowering cholesterol. “Soluble fiber creates a gel-like substance that can bind with cholesterol to help excrete it,” says Shelly Wegman, a registered dietitian at UNC Rex Nutrition Services. Research shows increasing dietary soluble fiber by 5 to 10 g per day can lower cholesterol by 5%.

### 2 Whole oats

“Old-fashioned” oats are a rich source of a kind of soluble fiber called beta-glucans. “Think of beta-glucans as long strands that tangle as they move,” says Daniel Gallaher, a food science and nutrition professor and researcher at the University of Minnesota. The strands “catch” cholesterol as they exit your body.

### 3 Sesame oil

This nutty oil is rich in heart-healthy compounds called phytosterols. “They help block the absorption of harmful LDL cholesterol,” says Judy Fulop, a naturopathic doctor at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

**IT MAY BE ONE OF THE** most popular words of the millennium: *superfood*. Between 2011 and 2015, the number of product labels containing the words *superfood*, *superfruit*, or *supergrain* increased by over 200% worldwide. But these terms aren’t regulated, and many superfood benefits aren’t proven. While the latest trendy foods seem to have a health halo, those that experts consistently recommend have always been in plain sight. “You don’t need fancy or expensive foods,” says Diane Vizthum, a research dietitian at Johns Hopkins University. The everyday foods on our list are packed with nutrients known to help prevent or alleviate health conditions. Stock your kitchen for a longer, healthier life.

## REDUCE BLOOD SUGAR

### Blueberries

A *BMJ* review found that adults who ate blueberries had up to a 26% lower risk of type 2 diabetes than those who didn't. Blueberries' bioactive compounds may increase insulin sensitivity.

### 5 Lentils

This legume is high in fiber, which slows the body's process of turning carbohydrates into glucose in the blood, preventing a spike in blood sugar levels. Toss lentils into salads or tacos for a filling meal.

### 6 Cinnamon

Research shows that ½ tsp of cinnamon daily can make cells more sensitive to insulin. This may be due to the spice's polyphenol compounds, which help improve glucose control.

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LEVI BROWN/TRUNK ARCHIVE

## FIGHT INFECTION

### Mushrooms

Edible mushrooms are a good source of selenium, which improves the body's ability to fight infection by increasing white blood cell production, and vitamin D (as long as they're grown in sunlight), which may play a crucial role in immune system regulation.

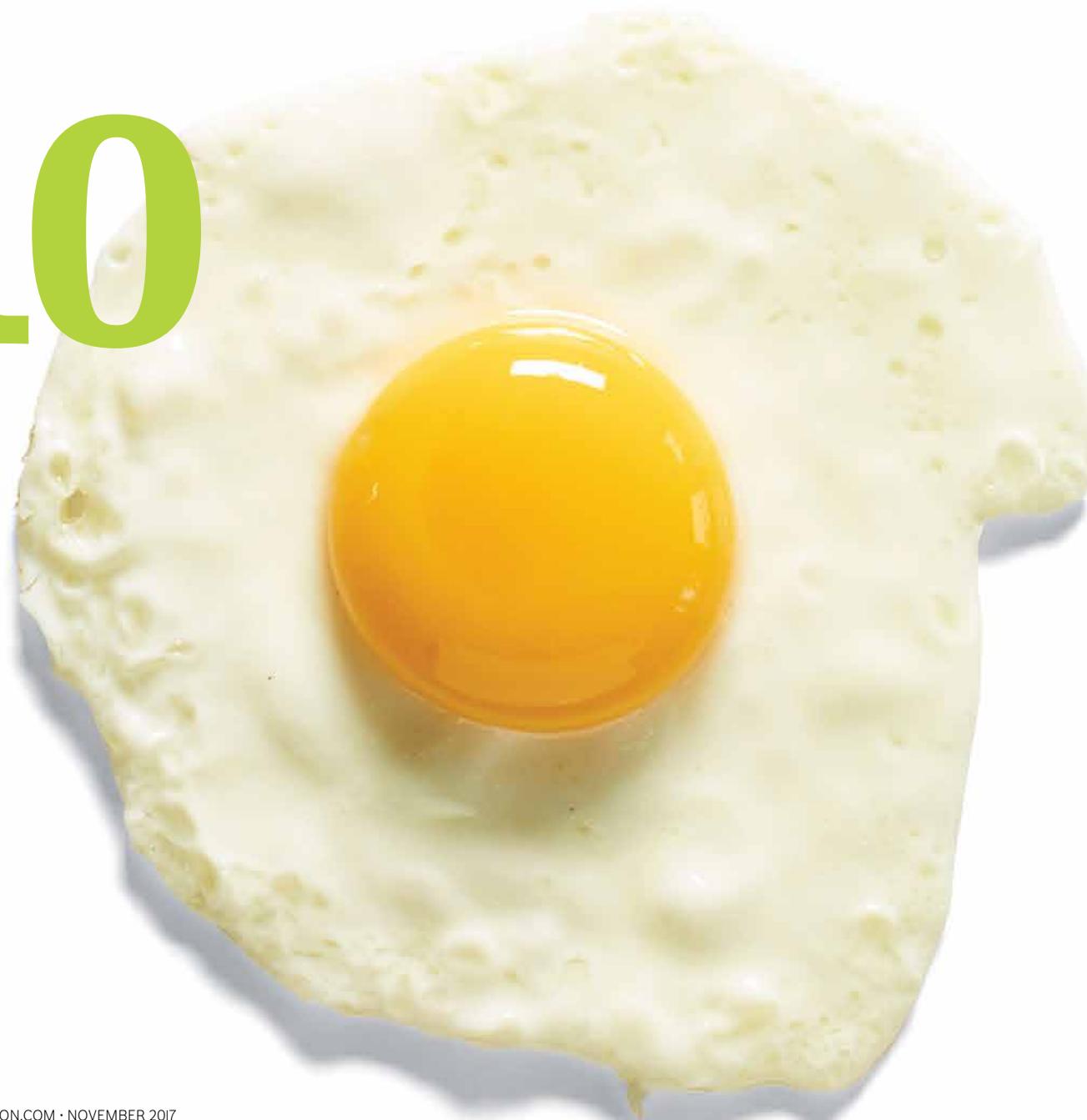
### 8 Carrots

The same nutrient that makes carrots healthy for your eyes—vitamin A—can help your body fight infection. People who are deficient experience an increased risk of infections (especially those that cause diarrhea and measles) even before they notice other symptoms of vitamin A deficiency, such as dry eye.

### 9 Spinach

This green is a good source of riboflavin and folate, B vitamins that alert the immune system to fight infection. An Australian study found that bacteria and yeast synthesize B vitamins in the body, creating by-products that trigger immune cells to recognize and fight infection.

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**IMPROVE  
LIVER HEALTH****Eggs**

Yolks are rich in choline, necessary to produce SAMe, an important detoxification agent in the liver. “Your liver naturally makes choline, but some people may be genetically predisposed to not make as much and need more,” says Fulop. “Consuming choline can support overall liver health.” Other good sources include dairy foods, fish, peanuts, and poultry.

**11 Brazil nuts**

Just one or two Brazil nuts provide more than your daily dose of selenium, a trace element that’s crucial for liver health. “Selenium is required for glutathione peroxidase, a major detoxification enzyme and antioxidant, to work,” says Vizthum. A 2016 study involving 477,000 adults found that those with the highest selenium levels were 5 to 10 times less likely to get liver cancer than those with the lowest levels.

**12 Brussels sprouts**

This cruciferous vegetable is a good source of sulforaphane, which may have protective effects for the liver. “Sulforaphane increases detox agents in the liver, boosting their function,” says Fulop. “It also decreases enzymes that cause liver damage due to factors such as excessive alcohol consumption.”

STEVE GIRALT

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## LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE

### Arugula

Sometimes forgotten as a superfood, this leafy green is one of the richest sources of nitrates (with six times more than lettuce). Nitrates are converted into nitric oxide, which widens blood vessels and eases blood flow, lowering blood pressure.

### 14 Dark chocolate

This treat is an excellent source of flavonoids, which a *BMJ* study linked to reduced blood pressure. "Heart benefits of chocolate have been seen with as little as 10 chocolate chips a day," says Adrienne Youdim, an associate professor of medicine at UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine. Opt for a 1 oz square of dark chocolate with at least 70% cocoa, or add unsweetened cocoa powder to oatmeal.

### 15 Milk

Research shows one daily glass of milk, a good source of blood pressure-lowering potassium, calcium, and magnesium, can lower the risk of developing hypertension. Skim milk is also recommended as part of the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet.

## RELIEVE HEADACHES

### 16 Coffee

Caffeine helps reduce the size of blood vessels that often enlarge before a headache or migraine, causing pain by stretching surrounding nerves. When caffeine is added to acetaminophen and aspirin, their pain-relieving effect increases by 40%. Drinking coffee at the onset of a headache may help ease the pain.

### 17 Almonds

Research has found that having low levels of magnesium, abundant in almonds, is linked to migraines. Magnesium "plugs" a certain receptor involved in the transmission of pain throughout the nervous system. Eat 1 oz of dry-roasted almonds (about 23 nuts) for 20% of the recommended daily value.

### Ginger

The anti-inflammatory properties of ginger can naturally mimic aspirin. One 2014 study from the Zanjan University of Medical Sciences in Iran found that ginger powder may be just as effective at treating migraines as some common medications. Ginger may also soothe nausea, a common side effect of headaches.



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For more superfoods and recipes, go to [prevention.com](http://prevention.com).

## EASE INFLAMMATION

### Tart cherry juice

Oregon Health & Science University researchers found that women who drank tart cherry juice twice daily for 3 weeks had significantly less inflammation than those who drank artificial juice. Tart cherries are rich in antioxidants that combat inflammation.

### 20 Eggplant

Purple and blue foods like eggplant get their hue from anthocyanins, antioxidants consistently shown to reduce inflammation, says Vizthum. Eggplant is rich in anthocyanins, with 750 mg per 100 g. Other good sources include blackberries and grapes.

### 21 Walnuts

A 2014 review in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that antioxidant polyphenolic compounds in walnuts can reduce harmful inflammation in brain cells, potentially lowering the risk of cognitive decline. Snack on walnuts on their own or sprinkle them on yogurt.

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## PREVENT CANCER

### Cabbage

This vegetable contains glucosinolates, which can fight cancer cells. "They change the way certain compounds are metabolized so they're less likely to cause cancer," says Gallaher.

### 23 Garlic

A study of more than 40,000 women found that those who ate the most garlic had a 50% lower risk of colon cancer than those who ate the least, likely due to an antioxidant in garlic called allicin.

### 24 Cranberries

According to a 2016 review, cranberries may help inhibit several cancers, including those of the stomach and brain. Certain cranberry compounds may cause cancer cell death and reduce harmful oxidative stress.

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## SOOTHE JOINT PAIN

### Broccoli

Sulforaphane, which a UK study found blocks enzymes that can cause painful joint destruction, is released during the consumption of broccoli. Broccoli is also rich in vitamin C, which helps ward off rheumatoid arthritis.

### 26 Green tea

Case Western Reserve University researchers found that epigallocatechin gallate, an antioxidant in green tea, may block enzyme activity that promotes joint damage. Add lemon juice to prevent EGCG from breaking down during digestion.

### 27 Salmon

This fish is a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, which research has shown to have potent anti-inflammatory properties that can help prevent rheumatoid arthritis and reduce pain in those who already have it.



## HEAL WOUNDS

### 28 Sweet potatoes

Eating a sweet spud, which has nearly six times the daily recommended value of vitamin A, may help prevent infection as you heal from a wound. "Vitamin A is important to keep your skin structurally sound," says Joan Salge Blake, a clinical associate professor of nutrition at Boston University. "Otherwise, bacteria and viruses can more easily enter the body."

### 29 Cashews

These nuts contain zinc, vital for wound healing. "Zinc reduces inflammation that accompanies skin wounds and helps produce proteins that enhance the quick production of skin cells," says Blake. One serving consists of 16 nuts; roast with cayenne for a zesty snack.

# 30

### Red bell pepper

Red bell peppers are brimming with vitamin C, essential for healing injuries. "When you have a cut, your body needs vitamin C to produce new collagen, a protein required to heal wounds," says Gallaher. A cup of chopped raw red peppers has more than double the daily recommended value. [12](#)

