

# Top 10 foods to eat for longevity

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Top 10 lists are always fun. And what better topic than foods that will help you live a longer, healthier life?

There are numerous recommendations. Some are quite specific. For example, Dr. Maoshing Ni, author of *Secrets of Longevity* has a top 10 list that includes: walnuts, sweet potatoes, peanuts, green tea, seaweed, sesame seeds, black beans, mushrooms, corn and pumpkin.

Dr. Joel Fuhrman, author of *Eat To Live* and a frequent nutritional speaker on public television, has a top 10 list for longevity that focuses more on categories of foods: green leafy vegetables; non-leafy cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts and cabbage; berries; beans; mushrooms; onions; seeds; nuts; tomatoes, and pomegranates.



Through all of these recommendations, there are some common themes. And they are very similar to basic nutritional recommendations.

**Eat fruits and vegetables:** Some fruits and some vegetables may be more packed than others, but all are loaded with fiber and important nutrients with a minimum of calories.

Berries have high levels of antioxidants. Green leafy vegetables contain folate, calcium and other nutrients. Cruciferous vegetables are high in phytochemicals, vitamins, minerals and fiber, and have been linked to a lower risk of cancer. Sweet potatoes are one of the best natural sources of beta-carotene, meeting 35 percent of an adult's daily requirement.

**Nuts:** For years, nuts were generally listed as foods to avoid or limit because they are high in fat. We now know that these fats, while high in calories, are healthy monounsaturated fats, beneficial for heart health.

Walnuts are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that help fight inflammation. Almonds are one of the best sources of vitamin E, an antioxidant. Cashews have iron, zinc and magnesium. Pecans have been found to lower LDL cholesterol by as much as 30 percent.

**Legumes:** Legumes also have a place on most top 10 lists. Black beans, pinto beans, white beans, red beans, peas, lentils — again a variety of nutrition profiles and all high in protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals and low in calories and fat.

**Fish:** Fatty cold water fish such as salmon, are another source of heart-healthy fats. They are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that protect against irregular heart rhythms and cardiovascular disease. The American Heart Association recommends eating fish at least twice a week.

**Mushrooms:** Mushrooms rank high with both Dr. Fuhrman and Dr. Mao. At least six varieties of mushrooms are known to provide a significant boost to the immune system.

**Chocolate:** Chocolate is good for you? That shouldn't be a hard pill to swallow, but no one has endorsed the candy,

fat and sugar that comes in the package. Actually, healthy chocolate has had minimal processing.

**Coffee and tea:** Both black and green tea are high in anti-inflammatory antioxidants that are beneficial for heart health. Studies have found coffee beneficial in lowering the risk of type 2 diabetes and age-related mental decline.

There are many foods nutritious enough to qualify for a top 10 for longevity list. The major task is making enough room on your plate for the foods that offer the greatest benefits.

*Contributed by Becky Huebner-Leu, Ministry Living Well-Fine Lines Learning Community, Marshfield. She can be reached 715-389-9895 or email [rebecca.huebner-leu@ministryhealth.org](mailto:rebecca.huebner-leu@ministryhealth.org).*

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