

Turn back time!

Here are 10 true superfoods – although maybe less glamorous than some currently bearing this label, they're endowed with proven anti-ageing powers.



BEANS

The wind factor makes beans slightly contentious, but the right cooking method overcomes this. Soak beans for 24 hours, then boil and skim them three times, each time in fresh water, before cooking, rinsing, and eating them. Doing this reduces the bond in the saponins – the soapy material that comes off the beans – and helps to prevent bloating and gastrointestinal cramping.

The saponins are responsible for beans' many beneficial effects. Clinical studies show they positively impact the immune system, which protects the body against age-related cancers. Beans reduce blood glucose response, making them ideal for diabetes and diabetic-type conditions, plus their ability to reduce platelet aggregation means a reduction in stroke risk.

Many studies show beans lower LDL cholesterol. They help boost circulation and possibly lower blood pressure, particularly when several meals each week are bean-based. It's also been demonstrated that eating more beans reduces dental caries.

BLUEBERRIES

The anthocyanin malvidin, which gives blueberries their signature blue colour, also protects endothelial cells from oxidative damage through various biochemical actions, one of which stops the reactive oxygen species, xanthine oxidase-I (XO-I), and increases the protective superoxide dismutase (SOD) along with heme-oxygenase-I (HO-I). This is important because the endothelium - the tissue lining the blood vessels that is also present in the lymphatic system - needs to be kept strong and intact as we age. If the structure declines, the result can be high blood pressure, damage through cholesterol plaque, and possibly a risk of stroke and heart attack.

Higher levels of SOD also reduce the detrimental effects of diabetes and different types of cancer, and Tufts University discovered that blueberries avert oxidative damage to skin, muscle, and gastric mucosa.

COCONUT WATER

People use coconut water in smoothies because of its ability to increase hydration, thanks to an electrolyte composition similar to that found in human plasma, which makes it very bioavailable. Coconut water contains compounds called cytokinins, phytohormones that regulate a plant's growth, development, and ageing of a plant; they're also anti-carcinogenic, anti-thrombotic, and in studies appear to exert an anti-ageing effect on human tissue, slowing down the rate of ageing considerably. The cells don't undergo as rapid degenerative changes as expected in ageing tissue: basically, these cells when tested act younger than their age. This cytokinin content may help reduce degenerative age-related

diseases like diabetes. Coconut water contains calcium, magnesium, and potassium, which endows it with its electrolyte-type properties. It's also a very good source of B-complex vitamins.

GINGER

Ginger tea is so beneficial, people should drink it daily as a medicine! With age, our taste buds lose their sensitivity, causing people to compensate by increasing salt and sugar in meals. Instead, we should choose more potent and beneficial herbs like ginger to flavour food.

Stiff and sore joints, muscle aches and fibromyalgia are the most frequent complaints we hear in clinical practice. Ginger's renowned anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties reduce the pain associated with these conditions. It can protect against chronic disease, with numerous studies showing ginger helps prevent colorectal cancer, a disease that occurs predominantly in those aged over 50. As an antioxidant, it's beneficial for the cardiovascular system, reducing cholesterol levels, hypertension, platelet aggregation, and inflammation in the endothelium. I also find it's very useful to alleviate nausea and vomiting with chemotherapy. If you take blood-thinning agents and intend having large amounts of ginger, talk to your GP as it can affect the drug's potency.

ONIONS

The interesting thing about onions is they can protect an ageing gastrointestinal tract, the function of which declines as we get older.

Onions are beneficial because they contain the prebiotic inulin. Many people take probiotic supplements – and these are very good – but to be effective they must be fed with a prebiotic. A study involving elderly, larger women found inulin consumption altered the composition of their gut microbiome. Changing the microbiome influences weight loss, which in turn lowers the risk of diabetes, something that increases with age: one in three people over 65 is likely to have the disease.

Onions are very high in polyphenols similar to the polyphenol ECGCs in green tea. These polyphenols play a critical role in halting the progression of diabetes and preventing neurodegenerative diseases in the aged, cardiovascular disease, and cancers. They're also loaded with sulphur compounds, which guard against age-onset cancers, and flavonoids, which decrease inflammatory diseases.

PARSLEY

Traditionally parsley was used as an antihypertensive and an anti-flatulence herb. Recent studies show parsley extract has anti-diabetic and antioxidant effects. A clinical benefit is that the

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As we age, our body's ability to digest and absorb nutrients declines.

Coconut water's nutrients are highly bioavailable, enhancing our ability to digest and absorb them.

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BEAT THE CLOCK

SUPERFOODS YOU MUST HAVE



extract can be used with diabetic medication, as its action is very gentle and takes time to build up. Used alongside insulin therapy, parsley has been demonstrated to minimise side effects and improve treatment parameters in both type 1 and type 2 diabetics. It also has potential to reduce other oxidative-stress-associated diseases, such as age-onset cancers. The (mainly animal) studies are currently showing that parsley can potentially regenerate B cell pancreatic function. A Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine report notes TCM uses parsley for urinary tract diseases, diabetes, gastrointestinal disorders, and hypertension. You need to eat at least a cup of packed leaves to obtain the full benefits; this is possible by having tabbouleh or making parsley-based pesto.

RED MEAT

This one is contentious as considerable controversy exists around eating meat generally, and beef specifically. However, if we follow the guidelines and limit consumption to under 500 grams per week of lean, grass-fed, organic red meat, we won't increase our risk of cancer. The proviso is that it's not barbecued to a cinder, which renders meat carcinogenic. Flipping it frequently also reduces those cancerous chemicals, as do marinades.

Grass-fed beef contains a highly beneficial 2:1 omega-6 to omega-3 ratio. The ideal in our diet is approximately 4:1, but studies show the reality is more like 20:1. Also present is some conjugated linoleic acid, a very important nutrient that, in combination with omega-3, reduces cardiovascular disease risk, and maintains the nervous system and visual tissue. Plus, the full complement of amino acids present in beef guards against sarcopenia, or muscle wasting.

SESAME SEED

Sesame seed is rich in manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, iron, phosphorus, vitamin B1, and zinc. It's also reasonably high in calcium, a mineral we need more of as we age. Ageing females in particular – and sometimes men – frequently suffer skin dryness. Skin doesn't heal as well, and hair becomes thinner, dryer, and even falls out. Sesame's calcium, essential fatty acids and proteins increase sebum secretion into the hair follicles, stabilising and feeding them so hair thinning is reduced. Also present are two unique lignans: sesamin and sesamol. Studies demonstrate these lignans lower cholesterol, prevent high blood pressure, and increase vitamin E in the tissues. Sesamol helps prevent post-menopausal and rheumatoid arthritis-associated bone loss, due to its effect on human mesenchymal stem cells. Tahini is the ideal way of eating sesame, as crushing the seeds increases the availability of these lignans.

TEMPEH

This soy formulation was originally fermented in Japan using a particular strain of bacteria:

Bacillus subtilis. This bacterium can form vitamin K2, making tempeh the only plant-based source of this animal-derived vitamin. (Vitamin K1 is plant-derived). Researchers found higher levels of K2 from a particular tempeh reduced the risk of hip fractures in older Japanese women: the soy fermentation and K2 form a hydroxyapatite form of a calcium mineral complex that makes bones very strong. While Australian-produced tempeh doesn't use that same bacterial strain, the fermentation process still offers benefits. When the calcium in soy is fermented, it becomes far more soluble and bioavailable. So do the isoflavones

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The soy fermentation and K2 found in tempeh form a hydroxyapatite form of a calcium mineral complex that makes bones very strong.

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genistein, and daidzein, according to an American Journal of Clinical Nutrition study. Soy isoflavones in tempeh can decrease both total cholesterol and LDL. The antioxidant proteins conglycinin and glycinin prevent inflammatory responses in the aged, boost immune function, and are possibly useful in cardiovascular disease, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis.

WALNUTS

Just four a day can lessen risk factors that increase with ageing, suggests the Harvard School of Public Health, thanks to the nuts' omega-3 essential fatty acid content. The fibre in walnuts helps manage cholesterol levels and improve digestive function, while their rich mineral content strengthens immunity. Walnuts are also very high in vitamin E, which reduces blood pressure; and protein and calcium, which improve bone strength, reduce inflammation, and repair brain tissue. The brain is more than 60 percent fat, and for it to function optimally we need to consume omega 3 essential fatty acids daily to maximise the cells' ability to take in nutrients and eliminate waste. Walnuts also contain B6 for the nervous system, which slows with age. Research shows that while walnuts are reasonably high in calories and fat, they don't encourage weight gain, most likely because their 20 percent protein content makes them filling, so you tend to eat less in the next meal. 🍵



MEET THE EXPERT

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