

The Times health special 1.9.18

Boost your health top 50 foods for brain heart and joints

Is your diet packed with the most nutrient dense foods is possible? From Sage to strawberries. Peta Bee asks the experts for the best ingredients to eat.

Dr Michael Mosley

I start most days with eggs. A large egg contains 77 calories and about 6 g of protein. It also contains vitamin A, folate, vitamins B2, B5, B12, phosphorus and selenium. The idea that eggs, because they contain cholesterol, will raise levels of the bad cholesterol is a myth. Eating cholesterol has almost no effect on cholesterol levels in the blood.

Jasmine Hemsley

Turmeric has an amazing anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Adding it to curries, warm milk and other recipes helps to support body, improve digestions and boost immunity. It also lends each dish deep earthy undertones and that distinctive golden tint.

Ian Marber is a nutrition therapist, ianmarber.com

Nuts are a handy way to get protein and fibre as well as minerals. Walnuts are a favourite of mine as they contain only get three fats in alpha linolenic acid form, but I have to be vigilant because it's easy to eat too many. Brazil nuts or also on the list because they are rich and selenium, a mineral that can be hard to find in the diet.

Dr Mark Porter

I eat a lot of soup. Preferably home-made, vegetable and spicy. Anything from cabbage, apple and ginger, two tomato, black pepper and balsamic vinegar. Healthy, cheap and low in calories (unless accompanied by a wedge of buttered crusty sourdough bread, which it is often is).

Matt Roberts Fitness guru

Are using awful lot of ginger. It's great anti-inflammatory (from a muscular and joint perspective), it has proven effects on the metabolism and it has a cleansing quality for the gut.

Deliciously Ella

I eat as many plant-based foods as possible: lots of veg, fruit, beans, nuts and seeds, as they make me feel so good. I try and get leafy greens – rocket, spinach and kale on my go-tos – into as many meals as I can because they're so rich in vitamins and minerals.

Lorraine Pascale

I eat a lot of berries. They are sweet, but don't contain too much sugar and are full of antioxidants.

Vegetables

1 Broccoli

Cancer fighting

This is a powerhouse of nutrients, including fibre and vitamins C. It also has high levels of glucosinolates, a classified to chemicals that may reduce the risk of prostate, breast and colorectal cancers. It is best eaten raw or lightly steamed.

2 Beetroot

For healthy blood pressure

Beetroots benefits stem from it being a good source of nitrates. A growing body of evidence suggests that these play a role in improving blood flow, maintaining immune function and cardiovascular health. The American Heart Association suggests a cup of beetroot juice a day might help to reduce blood pressure and shots have been shown to help recovery after exercise.

3 Kale

Keeps your cells young

Like other leafy green vegetables, it is rich in fibre and antioxidants such as lutein, carotenoids and beta carotene that fight cell damage. Last year of study at the University of Illinois involving middle-aged participants found that those with high levels of lutein – a Nutrient found in abundance in kale and spinach – had brain responses more like younger people than their peers. However, with four times as much vitamin C and significantly more vitamin A, kale beats spinach on other nutrients.

4 Onions

Great for your gut

A review of 64 studies by researchers at King's College London, published in the American Journal of clinical nutrition, found onions to be amongst the most gut friendly foods thanks to the prebiotic fibres they contain, which feed good bacteria in our digestive systems. They also rich in vitamin C and folic acid.

5 Sweet potatoes

Boost your immunity.

With high amounts of beta-carotene – the antioxidant carotenoid that is transformed into vitamin a in the body – sweet potatoes can contribute to eye health and boost the immune system. Boiling them insures that the nutrient is more absorbable. Their high potassium content is enough to significantly lower blood pressure if eaten regularly.

6 Pak Choi

Great for your bones

This cruciferous vegetable is packed with health benefits. It contains folate, which helps with a DNA repair and production, and selenium, which fights information, along with fibre for feeding good gut bacteria. It also contains bone friendly nutrients, including magnesium, calcium, phosphorus and zinc.

7 Artichokes

For better sleep

Artichokes are one of the best prebiotic foods – dietary fibres that serve food as for good bacteria inside the gut. A study at the University of Colorado last year found that their prebiotic powers might also improve sleep.

Spices and herbs

8 Turmeric

An excellent anti-inflammatory

Its active ingredient, curcumin, which is the bright yellow chemical produced by some plants, is a natural anti-inflammatory, linked better joint health and improved memory. Latest studies, including one in the American Journal of geriatric psychiatry in January, suggest that daily use of turmeric can boost memory and general mood of people with mild, age-related memory loss. Adding black pepper helps the body to absorb it.

9 Cinnamon

The fat fighting spice

Cinnamon has anti-inflammatory and cholesterol-lowering properties, and assists blood sugar control, so can help to prevent Type II diabetes. Last year a preliminary study by the American Heart Association also suggested that it might reduce the damaging effects of a high fat diet by slowing the fat storing process.

10 Garlic

Good for your blood

Garlic has antimicrobial properties thanks to the presence of allicin, an active compound released when a bulb is crushed. Garlic also have superb cardio-protective effects – it's thought that hydrogen sulphide, a chemical formed after garlic is cut or crushed, acts as a signal to relaxed but vessels. Freshly crushed garlic has most benefit.

11 Ginger

Eases muscle pain, fights nausea

Traditionally used to treat nausea and colds, ginger also has anti-inflammatory effects that can ease muscle pain caused by exercise. At the University of Georgia researchers measured inflammation and pain experienced by a group of exercisers who performed arm exercises with a heavy weight over 11 days. Those given a daily dose of ginger had significantly less muscle soreness.

12 Sage

Great for your brain

Clinical tests have proven that eating sage, rosemary or peppermint can fire up the neural pathways. David Kennedy, Professor of biological science and director of the brain, performance and nutrition research centre at Northumbria University, says: “We have consistently seen immediate improvements in brain function with sage and other herbs.”

Fruit

13 Oranges

Protect your heart and preserve your eye health

We know they are packed with vitamins C – adults need 40 mg daily of vitamin and a single orange can provide 46 to 69 mg – but they also contain potassium, which helps to regulate fluid levels in the body, and folate for healthy blood cells. A report in *Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association* a few years ago found that flavonoids in citrus fruits, of which oranges were the greatest source, seem to have a protective effect on the heart. In July an Australian study of 2000 people reported that those who had at least one orange every day had more than a 60% reduced risk of developing macular degeneration, the most common cause of sight loss amongst older people, 15 years later.

14 Avocados

Ward off metabolic syndrome

Avocados are packed with healthy monounsaturated fatty acids and vitamins, including the antioxidant vitamin E that protects cells against damage. These and other compounds – fibre and phytosterols – in the flesh of avocados mean they have lipid-lowering effects and have been shown to reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome, a cluster of risk factors including raise cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar. In a 2015 paper in the *Journal of the American heart association*, people who ate a moderate fat diet including an avocado every day had significantly lower LDL (bad) cholesterol after five weeks than those who didn't include the fruit.

15 Strawberries

Improve your cognitive function

A serving of a strawberries provides more vitamins C than a medium orange. They are a concentrated source of the beneficial plant compounds flavonoids and have been dubbed a brain food for their ability to ward off age-related neurodegeneration. In August team of researchers from the University of Massachusetts reported to the American chemical Society how one serving might help to alleviate the symptoms of inflammatory bowel disease. They were also highlighted as a food to improve heart health by experts reporting in the *Journal of the American College of cardiology*, who said we should aim for a least three servings a week.

16 Apples

Lower your cholesterol and burn calories

Rich in vitamins C and fibre, apples have been dubbed a “miracle fruit”. Scientists at Florida State University found that older women who start eating the fruit daily experienced a 23% drop in LDL (bad) cholesterol after six months. Always eat with the peel on, not just for more fibre and antioxidants, but because it contains ursolic acid, a compound that has been shown to fuel calorie burning.

17 Tomatoes

Protect against skin cancer

Carotenoids - the antioxidant compounds give tomatoes there colour – are responsible for many of the beneficial effects of the fruit, including their ability to protect against ultraviolet light damage. Daily tomato consumption was found to cut skin cancer rates in half an one study. Of tomatoes carotenoids, lycopene is

the most potent and is linked to reduced risk of prostate cancer. Cooking tomatoes boosts the disease fighting power of lycopene.

18 Chilli peppers

Boost longevity

Rich in disease fighting antioxidant carotenoids, chilli peppers also contain capsaicin, an active ingredient that provides the fiery heat along with a host of health benefits. Last year a study in the Journal PLOS One involving more than 16,000 people showed that those who ate chilli peppers had a lower risk of death from all causes over an average of 18 years and those who did not add chillies to food. Capsaicin has been shown to activate receptors of cells lining in testing, helping to reduce the risk of gut tumours.

19 Blueberries

Great for memory

Blueberries get a big tick from cardiologists as a heart healthy food, but they also have proven benefits for the ageing brain thanks to their rich antioxidant and flavonoid content. Last year researchers at the University of Exeter found that healthy people aged 65 to 77 who were given 30 mls of concentrated blueberry juice daily (the equivalent of 230 g of the fruit) experience improvements in brain function while carrying out the series of cognitive tests. An earlier University of Cincinnati study found that people with mild cognitive impairment who ate a serving of blueberries every day for 16 weeks experienced improved memory.

Nuts and seeds

20 Almonds

Help to lower blood fats

A regular handful of almonds will help your body to clear bad cholesterol from your bloodstream more effectively, according to a study in the Journal of Nutrition last year. Eat them with the skins on because that's where much of the beneficial fibre is stored.

21 Brazil nuts

Cut your prostate cancer risk

As one of the best sources of selenium, Brazil nuts can play a role in prostate cancer prevention, according to a recent study funded by the World Cancer Research Fund. Selenium, needed for the production of a range of enzymes and hormones, is key to keeping the immune system in check and can have an anti-inflammatory effect on the prostate.

22 Chia seeds

For better digestion

High in omega-3 fatty acids, calcium, phytonutrients and a range of vitamins and minerals, chia seeds are also a complete protein, containing all nine essential amino acids that cannot be made by the body. They are packed with almost 11 g of fibre for per 25 g, making them a filling, low-calorie (121 cal per 25 g) digestive aid.

23 Walnuts

Improve your colonic health

Research published in the Journal of Nutrition this year showed that eating a small handful of walnuts daily improves gut health and possibly helps to reduce the risk of colorectal cancer. Walnuts have higher antioxidant levels than most other nuts and are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, important for heart health.

24 Sunflower seeds

Help to fight stress

The B complex vitamins these seeds contain will help to strengthen the healthy nervous system and ward off the effects of stress. They are a good source of minerals, including phosphorus, magnesium, iron, calcium, potassium and vitamin E for healthy skin.

Beans and pulses

25 Lentils

Lower your blood sugar

These high-protein pulses contain plenty of important minerals such as manganese and folate. They can also slow digestions and the release of sugars found in starch into the bloodstream, reducing the risk of type two diabetes and long-term. Canadian researchers found last year that replacing half of the white rice in a meal with lentils meant that blood glucose levels dropped by 20% after eating.

26 Kidney beans

Help with weight loss

Eating a daily 130 g serving of kidney beans could help to keep weight off. A meta-analysis of 21 clinical trials involving 940 adult men and women found that people who added pulses, including kidney beans, to their daily diet, but made no other changes, lost an average of 0.34 kg (0.75 lb) over six weeks. Findings were published in the American Journal of clinical nutrition.

27 Chickpeas

Boost your cardiovascular health

Hummus and the chickpeas from which it is made were highlighted as a heart healthy food in a review published in the Journal of the American College of cardiology recently. Trials have shown that adding just one daily serving (130 g) of chickpeas to your diet encourages the consumption of fewer unhealthy saturated and trans-fats, and leads to a 5% lowering of cholesterol levels, in the process.

28 Mung beans

Muscle repair

These legumes contain plenty of magnesium, useful for muscle repair after exercise, as well as potassium, folate, fibre and vitamin B6. A 2011 paper in the Journal of chemistry revealed that “mung beans have biological activities, including antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory” and other properties.

Dairy products

29 Greek yoghurt

Muscle building

With more protein and slightly fewer carbohydrates than regular yoghurt, Greek yoghurt contains all the essential amino acids needed for muscle building. Much of the protein is casein, which is slowly released and digestive. Studies have shown that eating a small pot before sleeping (and after exercising) can help to promote lean muscle development. It's also a good source of calcium, important for bone strength, and there's good bacteria for your gut too.

30 Whole milk

Thyroid health

Milk is the main source of our iodine, need to make thyroid hormones and important for normal foetal brain development during pregnancy. Switching to nonmilk alternatives puts is at risk of iodine deficiency, according to studies at the University of Surrey last year. A 200 ml glass also provides protein, calcium and B vitamins. Researchers at the University of Kansas medical Centre found a correlation between milk consumption and levels of a naturally occurring antioxidant called glutathione in the brains of older people.

31 Eggs

Stroke reduction

Eggs have been shown to have beneficial effects for health, including the heart. Eating an egg a day could even cut your risk of suffering a stroke by as much as 26%, reported a recent study carried out in China and the UK and published in the Journal heart. Eggs contain high-quality protein, many vitamins and cardiovascular friendly bioactive components such as phospholipids.

32 Roquefort cheese

Anti-inflammatory

A UK-based biotech company report that Roquefort's anti-inflammatory properties increased the longer the cheese was ripened. “Moulded cheeses including rock for, may be even more favourable to cardiovascular

health,” they wrote in the medical hypotheses journal. Blue cheese also contains dietary spermidine, associated with reduced blood pressure.

33 Parmesan cheese

Microbiome boost

An excellent source of calcium– it contains 300 mg in a 30 g serving, more than cheddar and many other cheeses – its biggest plus is that been fermented it contains lactic acid bacteria that can create gut friendly probiotics for a healthy microbiome.

34 Cottage cheese

High in calcium

Cottage cheese is relatively low in fat but high in calcium, which is important for strong bones. It also contains 12 g of protein per 100 g, which is more than yoghurt, and helps to fill you up.

Fish and meat

35 Salmon

Heart health

We should be eating oily fish twice a week because of the Omega three fatty acids it contains, which reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and strokes – and salmon is amongst the richest sources.

36 Canned sardines

Great for bone health

Sardines deliver more calcium per serving than most of the foods, largely because of their soft edible Bones. A 100 g serving of sardines canned in olive oil provides 382 mg of calcium, about 40% of the amount an adult will need in a day. They also provide vitamin D, critical for bone health.

37 Venison

The healthy meat choice

With one third of the fat in beef and fewer calories than chicken, venison is a healthy meat choice. It’s iron content means is also a wise choice for the estimated 4 million Britons at risk of and deficiency. Venison has the highest source of iron in all meats, containing 4.5 mg of iron per 100 g, compared with 0.7 mg in chicken and 3.5 mg in beef.

Grains

38 Oats

Relieve skin conditions

A soluble fibre called Beto glucans in a oats is known to reduce blood cholesterol when eating regularly. They also contain 20 unique plant compounds, called have avenanthramides, that have a powerful antioxidant perfect and can help to relieve irritating and itchy skin conditions, according to research at Tufts University's human nutrition research centre in the US.

39 Wheatgerm

Boosts gut bacteria

This is the most nutritious part of wheat that is often removed before it is made into flour, but which is best served sprinkled on breakfast cereal or into yoghurt. With high amounts of the powerful antioxidant vitamin D and fibre, it has been shown to help to lower blood cholesterol and, in a study at the University of Bologna, to increase levels of the beneficial gut bugs lactobacillus and bifidobacterium.

40 Quinoa

Reduce blood triglycerides

It is popular due to its high protein content, but it also have specific health benefits. Last year, a study in the journal current developments and nutrition found that overweight people who ate 50g of quinoa as part of their normal diet had significantly lower levels of serum triglycerides after 12 weeks. High levels of these triglycerides are a risk factor for heart disease.

41 Brown rice

Diabetes protection

Brown rice is a wholegrain with nutritious germ and fibrous bran intact, whereas white rice is milled and processed with nutrients discarded. Harvard scientists showed that whereas eating five or more servings of white rice we lead to an increase risk of Type II diabetes, eating at least two servings of brown rice every week was associated with a lower risk.

42 Barley

Helps with weight loss

It's almost fat-free, but also filling (thanks to the fibre) and has a low glycaemic index (GI), which means it doesn't provide unhealthy spikes in the blood sugar that cause cravings. Adding Barley to the diets of obese patients help them to lose weight in one study published in the Journal of nutrition.

Oils and vinegars

43 Extra-virgin olive oil

Protects brain cells

A staple in the heart healthy Mediterranean diet, extra-virgin olive oil has high levels of monounsaturated fatty acids that can help to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. You can also boost brain health, reported a 2017 paper in the annals of clinical and translational neurology. Using extra-virgin olive oil was found to protect memory and reduce the formation of damaging plaques and neurofibrillary tangles in the brain, which are markers of degenerative condition such as Alzheimer's disease.

44 Walnut oil

Aids stress relief

A diet rich walnut oil may prepare the body to deal better with stress, according to Penn State University researchers. They found that walnut oil lowered resting BP and BP responses to stress in the laboratory. It also has cardioprotective benefits primarily from its high concentration of the omega-3 fatty acid, alpha linolenic acid. The antioxidants, specifically ellagic acid, in walnut oil have been linked to the prevention of some cancers.

45 Apple cider vinegar

Metabolism

The acetic acid in vinegars aids digestions and the acid it contains may help to fire up fat metabolism and stabilise blood sugar. Consume no more than 4 tablespoons daily.

And the rest

46 porcini mushrooms

Anti-ageing

In a study at Penn State University last year scientist is found mushrooms to be not only low in fat and high in fibre, but the best food source of two anti-ageing antioxidants – are ergothioneine and glutathione – with porcini topping a lot.

47 Dark chocolate

Improves focus

A rich source of flavonoids that support cognitive, endocrine and cardiovascular health. Most recently research at Loma Linda University in California found that 70% cocoa chocolate improves brain health and focus.

48 Red wine

Heart health

Evidence has shown that the antioxidant compounds found in red wine are beneficial to heart health. Just stick to healthy amounts (no more than 14 units of alcohol week).

49 Coffee

Longer life

Researchers at the National Cancer Institute in Maryland announced recently that people who drink up to 7 cups of black coffee a day can cut their risk of early death and are less likely to die of some cancers and cardiovascular disease.

50 Keffir

Intestinal health

With a wider range of beneficial bacteria than yoghurt, this fermented drink has a well-deserved reputation as a gut health enhancer.