

# 40 Best Age-Erasing Superfoods

The latest science on the muscle-building, brain-enhancing, wrinkle-erasing, heart-strengthening, bone-protecting, immunity-boosting, and inflammation-fighting foods you should be eating every day. By the editors of **Men's Health**.

## 1. Almonds

These energy-rich snacks lower bad cholesterol, thanks to plant sterols, and benefit diabetics by lowering blood sugar. They're also rich in amino acids, which bolster testosterone levels and muscle growth. Almonds are also stuffed with vitamin E, which helps defend against sun damage. In a study, volunteers who consumed 14 milligrams of the vitamin (about 20 almonds) per day and then were exposed to UV light burned less than those who took none. And because vitamin E is an antioxidant, it also works to keep your arteries free of dangerous free radicals. Low levels of vitamin E are also associated with poor memory performance and cognitive decline, says dietitian Sari Greaves of New York Presbyterian Hospital–Cornell.

## 2. Flaxseeds

Rich in protein and fiber, these little seeds offer a payload of omega-3 fatty acids, which erase spots and iron out fine lines in the skin. The British Journal of Nutrition reported that participants in one study who downed about half a teaspoon of omega-3s daily in 6 weeks experienced significantly less irritation and redness, along with better-hydrated skin. A recent study of people with high cholesterol (greater than 240 mg/dL) compared statin treatment with eating 20 grams of flaxseed a day. After 60 days, those eating flaxseed did just as well as those on statins. Try sprinkling ground flaxseed on oatmeal, yogurt, and salads.

## 3. Tomatoes

There are two things you need to know about tomatoes: red are the best, because they're packed with more of the antioxidant lycopene; and processed tomatoes are just as potent as fresh ones, because it's easier for the body to

absorb the lycopene. Studies show that a diet rich in lycopene can decrease your risk of bladder, lung, prostate, skin, and stomach cancers, as well as reduce the risk of coronary artery disease, and help eliminate skin-aging free radicals caused by ultraviolet rays. “Cooked tomatoes and tomato paste work best,” says celebrity trainer Gunnar Petersen.

## **4. Sweet Potatoes**

Often confused with yams, these tubers are one of the healthiest foods on the planet. In addition to countering the effects of secondhand smoke and preventing diabetes, sweet potatoes contain glutathione, an antioxidant that can enhance nutrient metabolism and immune-system health, as well as protect against Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, liver disease, cystic fibrosis, HIV, cancer, heart attack, and stroke. What’s more, they’re also loaded with vitamin C, which smoothes out wrinkles by stimulating the production of collagen. A recent study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that volunteers who consumed 4 milligrams of C (about half a small sweet potato) daily for 3 years decreased the appearance of wrinkles by 11 percent.

## **5. Spinach**

It may be green and leafy, but spinach—a renowned muscle builder—is also the ultimate man food. The heart-health equivalent of a first-ballot Hall of Famer, spinach is replete with the essential minerals potassium and magnesium, and it’s one of the top sources of lutein, an antioxidant that may help prevent clogged arteries. Plus its vitamins and nutrients can bolster bone-mineral density, attack prostate cancer cells, reduce the risk of skin tumors, fight colon cancer, and, last but not least, increase blood flow to the penis. “Popeye was on to something,” says Susan Bowerman, assistant director of the Center for Human Nutrition at the University of California at Los Angeles.

## **6. Rosemary**

The carnosic acid found in this spice has been shown to reduce stroke risk in mice by 40 percent, according to a study published in the Journal of Neurochemistry. Carnosic acid appears to set off a process that shields brain cells from free-radical damage, which can worsen the effects of a stroke. It can also protect against degenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s and the general

effects of aging.

## **7. Wild Salmon**

A 4-ounce serving of salmon has approximately 2,000 milligrams of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), omega-3 fatty acids that serve as oil for the brain's hardware by helping nerve cells communicate with one another. Thirty-five percent of your brain consists of fatty acids like these, but they can decline as the years stack up. A 2008 University of Cincinnati study, for instance, found that the brain tissue of 65- to 80-year-olds contained 22 percent less DHA than the brain tissue of 29- to 35-year-olds. "If you want to keep your wits about you as you age, start consuming omega-3s now," says William Harris, Ph.D., a nutrition researcher at the University of South Dakota. Why is wild so important? Because farmed fish, which are fattened with soy, can be as high in inflammatory omega-6 fats as a cheeseburger. If in doubt, opt for sockeye salmon, which can't be farmed and is always wild. Aim for at least two servings a week, says dietitian Joan Salge Blake, author of *Nutrition and You*.

## **8. Blueberries**

"This potent little fruit can help prevent a range of diseases from cancer to heart disease," says Ryan Andrews, the director of research at Precision Nutrition, in Toronto, Canada. Think of blueberries as anti-rust for your gray matter, too. Besides being rich in fiber and vitamins A and C, they're also packed with antioxidants—only açai, an Amazonian berry, contains more—that neutralize the free radicals that cause neuronal misfires. Eat a cup a day, and opt for wild blueberries whenever possible, as they contain 26 percent more antioxidants than cultivated varieties.

## **9. Green Tea**

Green tea releases catechin, an antioxidant with proven anti-inflammatory and anticancer properties. Research found that drinking 2 to 6 cups a day not only helps prevent skin cancer but might also reverse the effects of sun damage by neutralizing the changes that appear in sun-exposed skin. Other studies show

that green tea—infused with another antioxidant called epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG)—can boost your cardiovascular health and reduce the risk of most types of cancer.

## **10. Dark Chocolate**

Flavonoids, a natural nutrient in cocoa, improve blood flow in the brain, which helps boost cognitive function. Plus dark chocolate contains a tannin called procyanidin, which is also found in red wine, that can keep your arteries flexible and your blood pressure low. It helps on the outside, too. In a study from the *Journal of Nutrition*, women who drank cocoa fortified with a chocolate bar's worth of flavonols had better skin texture and stronger resistance to UV rays than those who drank significantly fewer flavonols. Indulge in 1 ounce a day to get all the benefits, says dietitian Sari Greaves of New York Presbyterian Hospital–Cornell.

## **11. Tuna**

Your favorite deli sandwich has a little secret: Selenium. This nutrient helps preserve elastin, a protein that keeps your skin smooth and tight. The antioxidant is also believed to buffer against the sun (it stops free radicals created by UV exposure from damaging cells). Tuna is also a great source of protein, contains no trans fat, and a 3-ounce serving of chunk light contains 11 mg of heart-healthy niacin, which has been shown to help lower cholesterol and help your body process fat. University of Rochester researchers determined that niacin raises HDL cholesterol (the good kind) and lowers triglycerides more than most statins alone.

## **12. Carrots**

Think of carrots as orange wonder wands—good for the eyeballs, and good for clearing up breakouts. No magic here, though, just plenty of vitamin A, which prevents overproduction of cells in the skin's outer layer. That means fewer dead cells to combine with sebum and clog pores. They're also spiked with carotenoids—fat-soluble compounds that are associated with a reduction in a wide range of cancers, as well as a reduced risk and severity of inflammatory conditions such as asthma and rheumatoid arthritis.

## 13. Dried Plums

Also known as prunes, these dark shrivelers are rich in copper and boron, both of which can help prevent osteoporosis. “They also contain a fiber called inulin, which, when broken down by intestinal bacteria, makes for a more acidic environment in the digestive tract,” says Bowerman. “That, in turn, facilitates calcium absorption.”

## 14. Whole Grains

Whole grains—oatmeal, wheat flour, barley, brown rice—are high in fiber, which calms inflamed tissues while keeping the heart strong, the colon healthy, and the brain fueled. Whole grains can be loaded with carbs, but the release of those sugars is slowed by the fiber, and because they can pack as much as 10 grams of protein per 1/2-cup serving, they also deliver steady muscle-building energy. But not all breads and crackers advertised as “whole grain” are the real deal. “Read the label,” says Lynn Grieger, an online health, food, and fitness coach. “Those that aren’t whole grain can be high in fat, which increases inflammation.”

## 15. Red Wine

Swimming in resveratrol—a natural compound that lowers LDL, raises HDL, and prevents blood clots—red wine can truly be a lifesaver. A recent review in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, for instance, suggests that resveratrol may prevent or delay the onset of chronic disease. But limit your intake to two drinks a day. According to a study of 6,000 patients in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, you’re 97 percent more likely to reach your 85th birthday if you keep your daily alcohol consumption to fewer than three drinks. Vin rouge is also a rich source of flavonoids, antioxidants that help protect the lining of blood vessels in your heart, and may make you less likely to die of cardiovascular disease, according to Japanese researchers.

## 16. Yogurt

Various cultures claim yogurt as their own creation, but the 2,000-year-old food’s health benefits are not disputed: Fermentation spawns hundreds of millions of

probiotic organisms that serve as reinforcements to the battalions of beneficial bacteria in your body, which keep your digestive tract healthy and your immune system in top form, and provide protection against cancer. Not all yogurts are probiotic, though, so make sure the label says “live and active cultures.”

## **17. Avocado**

Chock full of monounsaturated fat, avocados deliver a double-barreled blast to LDL cholesterol (the bad kind). They are also rich in folate, a water-soluble B vitamin that helps lower the levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that can hinder the flow of blood through blood vessels. Eat a 1/4 cup twice a week, says Greaves.

## **18. Walnuts**

Richer in heart-healthy omega-3s than salmon, loaded with more anti-inflammatory polyphenols than red wine, and packing half as much muscle-building protein as chicken, the walnut sounds like a Frankenfood, but it grows on trees. Other nuts combine only one or two of these features, not all three. A serving of walnuts—about 1 ounce, or seven nuts—is good anytime, but especially as a postworkout recovery snack.

## **19. Turmeric**

Curcumin, the polyphenol that gives turmeric its tang and yellow hue, has anticancer properties, anti-inflammatory effects, and tumor-fighting activities known in nutrition-speak as anti-angiogenesis. Researchers at UCLA have also found that it helps deter the accumulation of amyloid plaques in the brain, tiny blockages that may cause Alzheimer’s disease. Turmeric’s prevalence in India, the researchers suggest, may help explain why so few of the country’s senior citizens have the disease, whereas the statistic is close to 13 percent in the United States, according to the Alzheimer’s Association. One tip: Pair it with pepper in curries. “Adding black pepper to turmeric or turmeric-spiced food enhances curcumin’s bioavailability by 1,000 times, due to black pepper’s hot property called piperine,” says nutritionist Stacy Kennedy of the Dana Farber Cancer Institute.

## **20. Black Beans**

People who eat one 3-ounce serving of black beans a day decrease their risk of heart attack by 38 percent, according to a study in the *Journal of Nutrition*. And while other beans are also good for your heart, none can boost your brainpower like black beans. That's because they're full of anthocyanins, antioxidant compounds that have been shown to improve brain function. They're also packed with superstar nutrients, including protein, healthy fats, folate, magnesium, B vitamins, potassium, and fiber.

## **21. Apples**

An apple a day reduces swelling of all kinds, thanks to quercetin, a flavonoid also found in the skin of red onions. Quercetin reduces the risk of allergies, heart attack, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and prostate and lung cancers. If given the choice, opt for Red Delicious. They contain the most inflammation-fighting antioxidants.

## **22. Alaskan King Crab**

High in protein and low in fat, the sweet flesh of the king crab is spiked with zinc—a whopping 7 milligrams per 3.5-ounce serving. “Zinc is an antioxidant, but more important, it helps support healthy bone mass and immune function,” says Bowerman.

## **23. Pomegranates**

The juice from the biblical fruit of many seeds can reduce your risk of most cancers, thanks to polyphenols called ellagitannins, which give the fruit its color. In fact, a recent study at UCLA found that pomegranate juice slows the growth of

prostate cancer cells by a factor of six.

## **24. Bok Choy**

This crunchy cruciferous vegetable is more than the filler that goes with shrimp in brown sauce. “Bok choy is rich in bone-building calcium, as well as vitamins A and C, folic acid, iron, beta-carotene, and potassium,” says celebrity trainer Teddy Bass. Potassium keeps your muscles and nerves in check while lowering your blood pressure, and research suggests that beta-carotene can reduce the risk of both lung and bladder cancers, as well as macular degeneration.

## **25. Oysters**

Shellfish, in general, is an excellent source of zinc, calcium, copper, iodine, iron, potassium, and selenium. “But the creamy flesh of oysters stands apart for its ability to elevate testosterone levels and protect against prostate cancer,” says Bass.

## **26. Broccoli**

One cup of broccoli contains a hearty dose of calcium, as well as manganese, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, and iron. And that’s in addition to its high concentration of vitamins—including A, C, and K—and the phytonutrient sulforaphane, which studies at Johns Hopkins University suggest has powerful anticancer properties.

## **27. Kiwis**

Like bananas, this fuzzy fruit is high in bone-protecting potassium. “They’re also rich in vitamin C and lutein, a carotenoid that can help reduce the risk of heart disease,” says Bowerman. “I try to eat at least one or two a week after

exercising.” Freeze them for a refreshing energy kick, but don’t peel the skin: It’s edible and packed with nutrients.

## **28. Olive Oil**

The extra-virgin variety is rich in beneficial monounsaturated fats. “Its fatty acids and polyphenols reduce inflammation in cells and joints,” says Grieger. A study in the journal *Nature* found that it’s as effective as Advil at reducing inflammation. “Have 2 tablespoons a day,” says Bowerman.

## **29. Leeks**

“Leeks can support sexual functioning and reduce the risk of prostate cancer,” says Michael Dansinger, M.D., an assistant professor of medicine and an obesity researcher at Tufts–New England Medical Center, in Boston. “Chop the green part of a medium leek into thin ribbons and add it to soups, sautéés, and salads as often as possible.” These scallionlike cousins of garlic and onions are also packed with bone-bolstering thiamine, riboflavin, calcium, and potassium, and they’re also rich in folic acid, a B vitamin that studies have shown to lower levels of the artery-damaging amino acid homocystein in the blood.

## **30. Artichokes**

Lauded for centuries as an aphrodisiac, this fiber-rich plant contains more bone-building magnesium and potassium than any other vegetable. Its leaves are also rich in flavonoids and polyphenols—antioxidants that can cut the risk of stroke—and vitamin C, which helps maintain the immune system. “Eat them as often as you can,” says Bowerman. Ripe ones feel heavy for their size and squeak when squeezed.

## 31. Chili Peppers

“Chilis stimulate the metabolism, act as a natural blood thinner, and help release endorphins,” says Petersen. Plus, they’re a great way to add flavor to food without increasing fat or calorie content. Chilis are also rich in beta-carotene, which turns into vitamin A in the blood and fights infections, as well as capsaicin, which inhibits neuropeptides (chemicals that cause inflammation). A recent study in the journal *Cancer Research* found that hot peppers even have anti-prostate-cancer properties. All this from half a chili pepper (or 1 tablespoon of chili flakes) every day.

## 32. Ginger

Contrary to popular belief, ginger—a piquant addition to so many Asian dishes— isn’t a root, it’s a stem, which means it contains living compounds that improve your health. Chief among them is gingerol, a cancer suppressor that studies have shown to be particularly effective against that of the colon. Chop ginger or grind it fresh and add it to soy-marinated fish or chicken as often as you can. The more you can handle, the better.

## 33. Cinnamon

Known for making desserts sweet and Indian food complex, cinnamon is rich in antioxidants that inhibit blood clotting and bacterial growth (including the bad-breath variety). “Studies also suggest that it may help stabilize blood sugar, reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes,” says dietitian Nancy Clark, author of *Nancy Clark’s Sports Nutrition Guidebook*. “What’s more, it may help reduce bad cholesterol. Try half a teaspoon a day in yogurt or oatmeal.”

## 34. Eggs

Those who have eggs for breakfast lose 65 percent more weight than those who

down a bagel breakfast with the same number of calories, according to a study in the International Journal of Obesity. Eat the yolk, too. Recent studies have proved that the fat in the yellow part is important to keep you satiated, and the benefits of its minerals and nutrients outweigh its cholesterol effect.

## **35. Figs**

Packed with potassium, manganese, and antioxidants, this fruit also helps support proper pH levels in the body, making it more difficult for pathogens to invade, says Petersen. Plus, the fiber in figs can lower insulin and blood-sugar levels, reducing the risk of diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Select figs with dark skins (they contain more nutrients) and eat them alone or add them to trail mix.

## **36. Grass-Fed Beef**

Nothing beats pure protein when it comes to building muscle. The problem with most store-bought beef, however, is that the majority of cattle are grain fed, which gives their meat a relatively high ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids. That, in turn, contributes to inflammation. The fatty acids in grass-fed beef, on the other hand, are skewed toward the omega-3 variety. Such beef also contains conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), which studies have shown help reduce belly fat and build lean muscle.

## **37. Mushrooms**

Delicious when added to brown rice, reiki, shiitake, and maitake mushrooms are rich in the antioxidant ergothioneine, which protects cells from abnormal growth and replication. “In short, they reduce the risk of cancer,” says Bowerman, who recommends half a cup once or twice a week. “Cooking them in red wine, which contains resveratrol, magnifies their immunity-boosting power.”

## **38. Pineapples**

With its potent mix of vitamins, antioxidants, and enzymes—in particular, bromelain—pineapple is an all-body anti-inflammation cocktail. It also protects against colon cancer, arthritis, and macular degeneration, says Grieger. (If only the “colada” part of the equation were as healthy.) Have half a cup, two or three times a week.

## **39. Fruit or Vegetable Juice**

Raise a glass of the good stuff. In a 2006 University of South Florida study, people who drank three or more 4-ounce glasses of fruit or vegetable juice each week were 76 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer’s disease than those who drank less. The high levels of polyphenols—antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables—may protect brain cells from the damage that may be caused by the disease, says study author Amy Borenstein, Ph.D.

## **40. Bing Cherries**

Research by the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that eating about 35 bing cherries a day can lower the risk of tendinitis, bursitis, arthritis, and gout, says Bowerman. Studies also suggest that they reduce the risk of chronic diseases and metabolic syndrome.