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## The Super 7: Foods With Benefits

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Lose weight! Boost immunity! Improve your love life! If there were a pharmaceutical drug that did all three, there'd be a stampede to the pharmacy, but for now, no such pill exists. My advice? Build your own - not a pill, but a plan -- an eating strategy that packs power, nutritional value and a host of benefits into every bite. Where to start? Simply load up on the "Super 7" -- the seven most nutritionally-valuable foods you can buy. What makes them super? Few calories, little sugar or salt plus lots of soluble fiber, nutrients and health-boosting phytochemicals, and not a drop of guilt should you overindulge! So, if you want to weigh less, look and feel great, the magic pill you've been looking for is in the organic produce aisle and at the seafood counter. Here are the "Super 7" -- the building blocks of excellent nutrition and sustainable wellness:

### Avocado

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The myriad of nutrients found in avocados -- oleic acid, lutein, folate, vitamin E, monounsaturated fats and glutathione among them -- can help protect your body from heart disease, cancer and degenerative eye disease. Avocados taste great and are easily integrated into any meal -- or even a fruit smoothie. Add a half an avocado to smoothies to add creamy texture and a powerful nutritional boost.

## Beans

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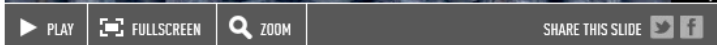
Dense and delicious, beans help raise levels of the hormone leptin, which curbs appetite, and they deliver a powerful combination of B vitamins, calcium, potassium and folate. All of this will help maintain healthy brain, cell and skin function and even helps to reduce blood pressure and stroke risk. Pretty amazing, eh? To increase your intake, try eating them as a filling side-dish instead of bread or potatoes. Beans will help keep you feeling fuller longer and deliver an excellent source of sugar-free energy through much of your day.

## Blueberries

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Tasty, sweet and packed with disease-fighting phytochemicals, flavinoids and soluble fiber -- all of which can help prevent serious diseases like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stomach ulcers and high blood pressure. In sum, blueberries are nearly miraculous! They also help tame inflammation throughout the body and can reduce "bad" cholesterol -- so dig in for better health. While most of us are used to enjoying blueberries at breakfast, they're also perfect for dessert. Having a snack attack? Instead of ice cream, curl up with a small bowl of frozen blueberries and pop 'em in your mouth, one by one.

## Cruciferous Veggies

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Want to lower your cancer risk? Put the cruciferous on your list, namely broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, kale and bok choy. Research suggests cruciferous veggies have the ability to inhibit the growth of some types of cancer cells and even stop others by reducing the production of free radicals. How to stuff more of cruciferous veggies into your diet? Don't wait 'til dinner, start your day with them -- add cruciferous veggies at breakfast to bulk up your morning meal, add more color to your plate and pack more nutrients into your day.

## Spinach

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If you remember the old-time cartoon character Popeye, you'll recall that he practically lived on spinach. Now granted, he was eating the canned stuff and I'll bet his spinach wasn't organic, but the message was clear -- spinach was a superfood even back then, long before we knew much about what it could actually do. So what makes spinach super? It's a treasure trove of vitamins, antioxidants and phytonutrients, loaded with nutritional goodies like vitamin A, B2, B6, C, K and E. There's also protein, fiber, omega-3 fatty acids and potassium. In other words, spinach is incredibly nutrient-dense and I'd suggest including it in just about every meal to help protect and support health from head-to-toe.

## Wild Salmon

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Flickr: Jeffrey Allen



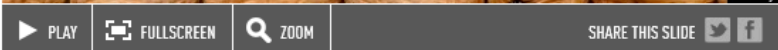
Wild salmon is a rich source of protein, vitamin D, selenium, B2, B3, B6, B12 and B3 and those all-important omega-3 fatty acids. So exactly what can wild salmon do for you? Quite a bit, including protection from cancer, cardiovascular problems, macular degeneration, depression and cognitive decline -- that's a lot of pluses in a pretty compact package. The best salmon to buy? Wild caught, Alaskan salmon, which routinely ranks low in contaminants and high in nutrients. Wild salmon's benefits start to kick in at about two servings a week, so there's no need to overdo it.

## Walnuts

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Walnuts -- you don't need to eat a lot of them to tap into their power. Just a few a day will deliver a healthy dose of omega-3s, alpha-linolenic acid, melatonin, copper, manganese and the hard-to-find gamma-tocopherol form of vitamin E, which helps protect your heart. Walnuts on your plate may also protect your brain and help slow the onset of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Not a nut fan? Crush or chop walnuts to add to cereal or fruit, or blend in two tablespoons of organic walnut butter to your fruit smoothies to reap the benefits of the mighty walnut.

