

“Yes” Foods

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As our journey toward better health continues in this New Year, our focus this month will be foods to say “yes” to. It seems we are bombarded by an abundance of information telling us about foods we *shouldn't* eat. When we are faced with so many “don'ts,” we tend to doubt the information and just eat what we want. In fact, scientists know of many foods that are known to be extremely beneficial and impact our health favorably. Food is “medicine” that can help our bodies reduce the risk of many diseases, boost immunity and slow the aging process. Keep in mind, these foods aren't “magic pills” that will cure all ailments and conditions, but are meant to be eaten as part of an overall balanced diet. Here are some of the foods that you might want to consider adding to your diet as you continue your journey toward optimal health:

- **Blueberries** – Fiber-rich, good source of potassium and contain potent antioxidants that help protect against age-related memory loss, heart disease and pack cancer-fighting agents. Eat fresh or dried. The potent nutrients are heat sensitive so keep them chilled if they are fresh. Berries of all sorts are good choices too.
- **Broccoli** – Loaded with anti-cancer substances, folate and fiber. Frozen broccoli is often better than fresh because it contains more florets, which house the most nutrients. If you don't like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale and cabbage have similar benefits.
- **Popcorn** – Light, transfat-free popcorn (Smart Balance) makes a filling whole grain snack. Try “I Can't Believe It's Not Butter” Spray for a buttery flavor without the fat.
- **Walnuts** – Contain omega-3 fatty acids that help protect against heart attacks, reduce inflammation and sterols that help keep cholesterol levels low. They also provide protein, fiber and magnesium. Toss into salads for a healthy crunch.
- **Peanut Butter** – Most of the fat in peanut butter is monosaturated so it helps to lower those cholesterol levels. PB makes a good substitute for sandwiches made with higher saturated fat meats and cheese.
- **Onions** – Contain sulfur compounds that help fight heart disease. They also have flavonoids that help protect against cancer.
- **Yogurt** – Excellent source of calcium, protein and good bacteria that boosts immunity and digestive function. It's even linked to fighting bad breath!
- **Avocados** – Source of cancer-fighting agents and good (monounsaturated) fats that help in lowering cholesterol. Add a few slices to sandwiches and salads.
- **Oats** – High in fiber so they can aid in lowering cholesterol, reducing insulin resistance and stabilizing blood sugars. They also contain selenium, magnesium, potassium and zinc. Watch out for the instant oatmeal packages, which typically contain lots of extra sugar.
- **Brazil nuts** – Want a good source of the potent antioxidant selenium? Eat just two each day to get your daily dose, which helps guard against prostate, colon and lung cancers.
- **Dark chocolate** – Contains polyphenols that help to reduce the risk of heart disease and lower blood pressure. For chocolate to be a “power food” it must contain at least 70% cocoa and be the first item listed under “ingredients” on the label.
- **Beans** – Black, kidney, pinto, etc. are excellent sources of iron, protein and fiber to help reduce cholesterol. They are also rich in potassium, magnesium and folate for lowering blood pressure and possibly benefiting the brain.

- **Tea** – Full of antioxidants called catechins, research suggests a strong benefit for reducing heart disease. Opt for freshly brewed teas because iced teas, ready-to-drink teas and premixed iced-teas are low in the antioxidant and often laden with lots of sugar.
- **Salmon** – Contains large amounts of omega-3 essential fatty acids that help to lower blood pressure, bad cholesterol, triglycerides and inflammation.
- **Sweet potatoes** – Try substituting these colorful spuds for the white ones. They have an abundance of beta-carotene, vitamin C, folate and calcium. Good for bones and boosting immunity!

There are many more foods that could be added to the list. Hopefully, this gives you some new ideas for your menu planning and that is a step in the right direction. For information on more “yes” foods, take a look at Dr. Andrew Weil’s website: www.drweil.com