



Brain booster:

BLUEBERRIES

Zoning out? This fruit may help you snap back. "Blueberries' high flavonoid content has been found to help short- and long-term memory," says Grotto. Remember to add a handful to a bowl of oatmeal or cereal.



Skin saver:

GRAPES

The skin of red grapes contains resveratrol, an anti-inflammatory that helps keep your skin looking good. Grotto says that several studies have shown that resveratrol can help protect you from UV radiation damage that may lead to skin cancer, too. (Bonus: you can also score these benefits from a glass of red wine.)



Belly-fat buster:

BARLEY

Carrying a little extra weight around your middle? Shed it by eating more whole grains like barley or amaranth (which, like quinoa, is a great source of protein). A Tufts University study found that people who ate diets rich in whole grains and limited refined grains had 10% less abdominal fat than those who didn't eat this way.



Cancer Fighter:

BLACK BEANS

To help protect against colon and prostate cancer, you may want to up your legume intake. Dried beans, peas, and lentils are packed with dietary fiber, which helps speeds waste through the gut, wiping out any carcinogens that may have built up there. What's more: beans are a rich source of folate, which helps repair damaged cells, says Grotto.



Cholesterol conqueror:

FLAXSEEDS

Flaxseeds are a great source of omega-3 fatty acids, which help decrease inflammation and fight plaque buildup. "Flaxseeds also contain two other components that target LDL cholesterol specifically: lignans and soluble fiber, the kind that rids your body of cholesterol," says Grotto. Ideally, your LDL would be less than 100 mG/dl. In addition to sprinkling flaxseeds onto oatmeal or cereal, continue to combat cholesterol by avoiding saturated fat and exercising daily. (And if you smoke, stop. Period.)



Cancer fighter: BROCCOLI

Pile these stalks on your plate, because this cruciferous vegetable—full of phytonutrients that decrease inflammation—helps stave off lung, stomach, and other cancers. Plus, "these natural chemicals also turn on tumor suppressor genes, which slow cell growth so that damage can be repaired," says Grotto. Eat it in everything from salads to frittatas.

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Fiber find: APPLES

This fruit packs a lot of pectin, a soluble fiber that helps prevent cholesterol buildup in blood vessels, reducing the risk of heart disease. Plus, their insoluble fiber helps keep your digestive system going strong. "But don't peel your apple—two-thirds of the fiber and lots of antioxidants are found in the skin," says Grotto.



Pre-workout fuel:

OATS

Exercise is key to staying young, and this super food will power you through your gym sessions. In a study published in the journal Metabolism, test subjects who consumed rolled oats 45 minutes before exercising had a significant performance advantage over subjects who had puffed rice or water. (We digest these carbs slowly, which means that our energy stays high long after we eat them.) So grab a spoon and get ready to be propelled through your workout like a teen who just drank Red Bull.



Bone builder:

HARD CHEESE

Yes, even dudes are at risk for osteoporosis, and when it comes to calcium, hard cheese is a champ, providing more calcium than softer varieties. Case in point: one and a half ounces of Parmesan has 500mg. These hard varieties also possess probiotic qualities to help your digestive system move smoothly, so...start grating. (It tastes great over salads and other vitamin-packed vegetable sides.)



Perfect pain-reliever:

GINGER

If aches and pains are getting you down more than they used to, add ginger to your diet. Its powerful antioxidants make it an all-natural anti-inflammatory that can decrease post-exercise muscle aches, according to the Journal of Pain. Consume it daily and ditch your bottle of Advil.



Ideal recovery drink: CHOCOLATE MILK

Exhausted after a workout that used to feel easy? Go ahead and guzzle a glass of chocolate milk. Yep—we were surprised, too. But low-fat chocolate milk has the ideal ratio of carbohydrates to protein to help you get the most of that exercise session, according to a 2011 study conducted by the University of Texas. More specifically, research participants who downed it instead of a pure-carb drink didn't just have a better body composition (more muscle, less fat), but they also ended up in better physical shape overall.



Cold combater:

CHICKEN SOUP

As we get older, we can't fight off colds like we used to—but that doesn't mean we need to let them slow us down. And it looks like Mom was right: A warm cup of chicken soup really can make you feel better when you're a sniffling mess. "Some research suggests that chicken soup may also work by exerting an anti-inflammatory effect on the upper respiratory tract, speeding along symptom relief and reducing the duration of the cold," says Grotto.



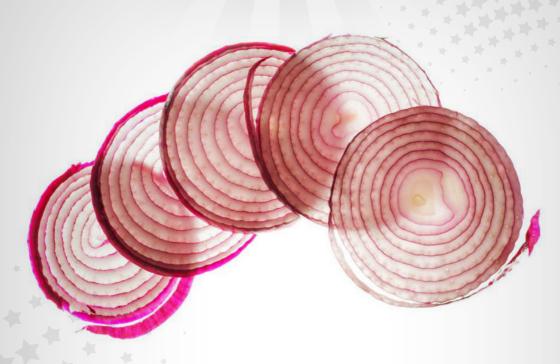
Shut-eye star:

CHERRY JUICE

Too little sleep can accelerate aging. In fact, in 2011, the Centers for Disease Control declared that insufficient sleep is a "public health epidemic" that's been linked to chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and depression. Yikes. So if you're tossing and turning, drink some cherry juice, which is packed with melatonin that "may prove beneficial in improving sleep quality and duration," says Grotto. Take a sip and catch some zzz's.

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Ulcer eradicator:

ONIONS

Don't get slowed down by stomach trouble. This bulb can halt growth of the bacterica H. pylori, which has been linked to ulcers, gastritis (stomach inflammation), and gastric cancer. According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, other flavonoid-rich foods like garlic and tea can also stop H. pylori in its tracks, keeping your stomach settled. (But take note: anything deep fried—hello, onion rings—doesn't count.)



Muscle magnifier:

SPINACH

Don't lose your hard-earned muscle tone—keep those guns flexing with spinach. (One study found that the nitrates it contains might make muscles stronger.) But this veggie is a superfood for tons of reasons, and it also packs the most magnesium per serving (163 mcg per cup). Magnesium helps maintain normal muscle and nerve function, and has also been shown to help regulate blood sugar and blood pressure, says Grotto. If you suffer from digestive issues such as Crohn's disease or frequent vomiting or diarrhea, you might not be absorbing enough of this nutrient. Sure, spinach is a great salad base, but this leafy green actually delivers the most magnesium when it's canned or cooked.



Iron man:

WHITE BEANS

Feeling like you're running on empty? Try upping your iron intake. Iron's a crucial mineral that binds oxygen in red blood cells, but we're not getting enough of it, which can lead to impaired cognitive function, fatigue, and inability to regulate body temp. How can you get your daily dose? Liver contains the most iron per serving, but if you'd rather steer clear of eating organs, opt for white beans. The strong runner-up is rich in copper, folate, and potassium, too.



Free radical fighter:

GUAVAS

We think of OJ as the go-to for vitamin C, but it turns out that this tropical fruit trumps oranges big time. "One cup of guava supplies four times what you need in a day of vitamin C," says Grotto. We need this vitamin to help protect against free radical damage that leads to aging, heart disease, and cancers. Plus, it contributes to collagen formation, which benefits skin, tendons, bones, and teeth.



Blood buddy:

This leafy green is a great source of vitamin K, which helps blood coagulate and prevents internal hemorrhaging. It may also help keep your bones strong as you age. Also, "high intake of cruciferous vegetables, such as kale, has been related to reduced risk of prostate cancer," says Grotto. To maximize your benefits, eat cooked kale instead of the raw variety.



Fierce breath freshener:

LETTUCE

Unfortunately, halitosis (aka bad breath) gets worse as we get older—but mints aren't the only cure. "Lettuce, often thought as being the least nutritious vegetable, may be one of the easiest and most effective tools you have at your fingertips to fight dragon breath," says Grotto. Instead of toting around a box of Altoids, just eat a salad for lunch. (But FYI: nibbling on lettuce isn't a substitute for brushing and flossing, and trust us—you want to maintain a good oral hygiene regimen. A recent Turkish study showed that guys with gum disease are three times more likely to suffer from erectile dysfunction!)



Post-exercise snack:

PEANUT BUTTER

Can't bounce back from a tough workout like you used to? Don't be deterred by the high fat content of peanut butter, which is an ideal part of any post-exercise snack. "Experts say post-workout meals should definitely contain some carbohydrate and protein, but fat is an important component of them, too, as long as the portion is moderate," says Grotto. Peanut or other nut butters deliver on all fronts.

