

The Ten Best Foods for Maximum Health

We are what we eat and assimilate, so what could be more important than always eating food that builds inner strength and resistance to disease, as well as warding off hunger?

1. WHEAT GERM

Wheat germ is the best buy of all health foods. It's a good source of just those vitamins and minerals and other nutrients that are lacking in processed foods – the B vitamins, vitamin E, calcium, protein and others. If you had to restrict yourself to one health food, wheat germ would be the best choice.

While health-minded people enjoy its taste, you can start slowly with it, sprinkling only a little on your morning cereal at first. Toasted wheat germ tastes best to most people, although heating does destroy some of the B vitamins. As time passes, you'll add more wheat germ to a variety of foods, and enjoy the rich nutlike taste.

2. SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Here is the number one choice for a health food snack to replace junk foods. Nutritionally, they're one of the richest of all seed foods, especially in essential oils. Sunflower has a higher percentage of protein than any other seed in use, higher than many cuts of meat. It's also high in minerals and vitamins, especially B6, E, iron and potassium.

For best nutrition, eat sunflower seeds raw and unsalted. They offer a wonderful boost to cereals, casseroles and other foods.

3. SPROUTS

Whole, unprocessed seeds are among the best of all foods, They're complete, with a fine balance of nutrients – protein, vitamins, minerals and fiber. When seeds sprout, their vitamin content increases dramatically.

Soybeans, for example, increase 500% in vitamin C content during sprouting. Riboflavin and pyridoxine (B6) quadruple in sprouting seeds. Niacin and folic acid also go up dramatically. In short, when a seed sprouts, nature triggers her most powerful vitamin manufacturing processed.

Sprouts have other advantages besides high-powered vitamin nutrition. They are cheap, especially when you make them yourself. Start with a small quantity of mung beans, the favorite of the Chinese for sprouting, and the easiest to handle. Soak them overnight, then put them in a jar or other container so they can be flushed with water several times a day. If kept moist and in the dark, they'll sprout to usable length in about three or four days.

They're a "fantastic" flavor addition to salads, and other types of foods. Stir-fry them with vegetables and strips of meat to make typical Chinese dishes. The best thing about sprouts is that they give you a cheap and continuous source of fresh salad ingredients that you can grow yourself all year long, even if you live in a city apartment.

4. NUTS

Nuts are one of the most widely available natural foods, sold in almost every store. They are packed in strong shells by nature, so they need no additives or preservatives to stay fresh.

Cashews, eaten raw, are now among the most popular health food nuts. They are a rich and economical source of protein, and have a fine flavor. Walnuts are great too, and hickory nuts are a gourmet treat, if you can find them.

Try to stay away from the salted, oiled nuts. They're higher in calories and not as nutritious. And don't gorge yourself, because nuts do carry a fair load of calories.

5. BROWN RICE

Brown rice, well prepared and served with other food, is both a pleasure and a boost to health. Get some organically grown short-grain rice. You'll find it in most grocery stores, and you may have to pay a little more, but some things are worth more, because they really are better!

6. HERB TEAS

Herb teas are finding their way into markets these days. The most popular are red zinger, mint, lemon grass, chamomile and blends merging those with others. Rose hips make up into a popular tea with a change-of-pace flavor.

Once you start drinking herb tea instead of coffee or regular tea, you can think of yourself as being well on the way to true health food consciousness.

7. WHOLE WHEAT FLOUR

Let's look at how bad the alternatives are to whole wheat flour. White flour has the bran removed, which means it contains almost no fiber. And dietary fiber, we are finding out, is crucial to the health of the digestive tract, and could even help to prevent heart troubles. White flour also contains much smaller amounts of important minerals and vitamins than whole wheat. So-called enrichment doesn't replace these needed factors in their entirety. So if you fail to switch your bread-eating habits to whole wheat you are asking for trouble in the long run.

8. FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Remember to keep in the work fresh. Fruits canned in syrup are too sugary to be healthful. Overcooked vegetables won't hurt you, but much of their good has been wasted. Good vegetables can be your most important tool in a weight-loss program. Eat less meat, cut out the sugar and white flour, and concentrate on both raw and lightly cooked vegetables. You'll soon be tightening your belt, and smiling more. To get a 100% health boost from vegetables, start eating greens like beet tops, collards, and turnip leaves. They're packed with vitamins and protein, and are low in fat. Some of the healthiest people in America come from areas where the eating of greens is a tradition.

9. EGGS

Our studies show that cholesterol is nothing to lose sleep over if you follow good dietary habits, get some exercise, and otherwise live a health-building life. Eggs have protein of outstanding quality, and are easily prepared in a variety of healthful ways.

10. BRAN

Like wheat germ, bran is another part of the wheat that gets in the way of the white flour bakers. Until recently, much of it was fed to animals. Just a few spoonful of raw bran a day will hold moisture in your intestines, insulate you against diverticulitis, and perhaps assure that you won't ever get appendicitis or even cancer of the colon. (For an even better chance of not getting colon cancer, eat bran and cut down on beef. It could be that toxic by-products of the digestion of fatty beef are a major culprit.)

PATIENT GUIDE TO FOOD ADDITIVES

Over 5,000 additives are used in the manufacture of the food we eat. Some estimates of individual consumption are as high as five pounds per year.

Even experts cannot agree on the safety or necessity for all of these chemicals. Some food additives are beneficial and safe, such as vitamins used for enrichment. However, there are additives which have proven to be potentially dangerous.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ADDITIVES

Substances or mixtures of substances, other than basic foodstuffs, present in food as a result of any aspect of production, processing, storage, or packaging.

INTENTIONAL ADDITIVES

Substances which may be present in processed food as a result of some phase of production.

ANTIOXIDANTS

Preservatives used to delay undesirable changes in fatty foods that have been processed. Fruits and vegetables change color, flavor and texture as they age. This enzymatic browning is inhibited by using additives.

ARTIFICIAL COLORINGS

Colors added to food products for eye appeal. Artificial coloring is synthesized and requires certification and approval by the FDA. Once approved, food labels need not specify colors by name.

ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR

Any substance that imparts flavor which is not derived from the natural form of the foodstuff.

DELANEY AMENDMENT

Part of the 1958 Food Additives Amendment stating that no additive may be permitted in any amount if tests show that it produces cancer when fed to men or animals or in any other appropriate tests.

EMULSIFIERS

Additives that give or maintain the desired texture, consistency, and thickness in food.

FDA (the Food and Drug Administration)

The federal agency under the Department of HEW which is responsible for the enforcement of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. This act prohibits the adulteration of food unless it serves a purpose and is safe.

GRAS

A list of about 600 substances which were exempted from the testing required by the Food Additives Amendment because they were judged by experts to be "generally recognized as safe" (GRAS). The FDA is currently reevaluating these substances to make sure they are safe by modern standards.

NATURAL FLAVOR

A wide variety of spices, natural extractives, and essential oils used to flavor processed foods. Only 500 of 2000 flavors used in food are of natural derivation.

PRESERVATIVES

Additives which guard against microorganisms causing food spoilage. Chemical preservatives are commonly used today in place of natural processing such as drying, souring and fermenting.

STANDARDS OF IDENTITY

For over 200 foods, no ingredients need to be listed. The FDA has determined a standard recipe, including standard chemicals; and as long as no other ingredients are added, no ingredient labeling is required.

SYNTHETIC COLOR ADDITIVES

RED #40

This synthetic color which replaced Red #2 in many foods, is added to soft drinks, ice cream, cherries, candy and cake frosting. It is an all-purpose red dye whose only function is to color the food; and is used to color foods that are not only red, but brown, purple and orange. Red #40 was shown to cause tumors in mice in preliminary results of a study prepared for the Allied Chemical Company, the manufacturer of the dye. Since the studies have not been completed, the FDA has not taken action. (ONLY the US, Mexico and Denmark permit this dye.)

CITRUS RED #2

This color is used for coloring the skins of oranges. It is suspected of causing bladder cancer in mice, and is on the provisional list of approved colors awaiting final reports.

YELLOW #5

This is the most widely used color additive. It is used in beverages, desserts, candy, cereal, ice cream, baked goods and snack foods; and is also used in prescription drugs, pain relievers, and antihistamines. It can cause allergic reactions, wheezing, asthmatic symptoms and hives. Individuals who are allergic to aspirin to be allergic to this additive as well. There was a proposal by the FDA on February 14, 1977, that this be identified as Yellow #5 on labels, instead of just being labeled artificial color.

BLUE #1 (BRILLIANT BLUE)

A coal tar derivative that is used in coloring for soft drinks, gelatins, desserts, ice cream, ices, dry drink powders, candies, cereal, pudding and bakery products. It may cause allergic reactions; tests have shown it produced malignant tumors in rats, but it is on the FDA permanent list of color additives.

The following dyes are also in current use

BLUE #2, GREEN #3, RED #3 RED #4, VIOLET #1 and YELLOW #6.

NATURAL COLOR ADDITIVES

The following are substances that are not chemically prepared and are used to color foods: paprika, saffron, cochineal, turmeric, caramel, carotene titane. Testing is not required for natural additives, so these have been permanently approved without having been tested, and their safety has not been proven.

COMMON CHEMICAL FOOD ADDITIVES

BROMINE

Bromine is a heavy, volatile, corrosive, non-metallic liquid element added to vegetable oil or other oils. It is dark brown or pale yellow, with a bland fruity odor. These high density oils are blended with low density essential oils to make them easier to emulsify in soft drinks, citrus flavored beverages, ice cream, ices and baked goods. Bromine has been shown to cause ill effects when released in the system at certain levels. However, it is permitted for limited use in flavoring oil and in fruit flavored beverages. Studies have recently been completed, and it is now under observation.

BHA - BUTYLATED HYDROXYANISOLE

BHA is an antioxidant preservative which prevents gas and oils from turning rancid. It is used in cake mixes, shortening, potato chips, dry breakfast cereals, gelatin desserts, candy, pudding and pie filling mixes, and bakery products. (Breakfast cereals normally have a shelf life of four months; with BHA added they can last one year.) BHA can cause allergic reactions, and an advisory panel has recommended further studies be conducted by the F.D.A. BHA is also on the GRAS list.

BHT - BUTYLATED HYDROXYTOLUENE

BHT is an antioxidant used in many foods, such as potato flakes, enriched rice and shortenings containing animal fats. It is a white crystalline solid with a faint odor. It is used as an antioxidant to retard rancidity in frozen fresh pork sausage and freeze-dried meats. This additive can cause allergic reactions. Experiments on mice have shown the offspring frequently had chemical changes in their brain and subsequent abnormal behavior patterns. Further studies are being done on BHT. This additive is prohibited for use in food in England.

CAFFEINE

Caffeine is an odorless, better tasting white powder found naturally in coffee, cola, guarana paste, mate leaves, tea and kola nuts. It is also synthetically produced. Caffeine is used medically as a stimulant of the heart and nervous system in certain disorders. It is also a remedy for poisoning by alcohol, opium and other drugs that depress the nervous system. When taken in small amounts it increases the circulation, however it is considered harmless. The dosage and effect varies with each individual, but it has been shown to cause nervousness, insomnia and irregular heart beat. High doses can cause convulsions. Caffeine can alter blood sugar release and uptake by liver and can cross the placental barrier. (The effect of this is being studied.) The FDA is studying the safety of caffeine, and it was announced that a more intensive review has been initiated by the agency.

GLYCERIDES

Mono- and di-glycerides of edible fats and oils are used as emulsifying and defoaming agents.

They are used in bakery products to maintain softness, in beverages, ice cream, ice milk, lard, chewing gum base, shortening, oleomargarine, sweet chocolate and whipped toppings. They are suspected of causing reproductive problems and malformations. Glycerides are on the list called "Generally Recognized As Safe"; however, di-glycerides are on the FDA list of food additives to be studied for harmful effects.

MSG - MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE

MSG is a flavor enhancer used in canned and frozen foods, prepared meats, pickles, soups, candy, baked goods, mayonnaise and "Accent", which is 100% MSG. It is a major ingredient in the preparation of Chinese foods, and it is referred to as causing the "Chinese restaurant syndrome". When MSG is absorbed into the blood stream, it rapidly affects the nerve endings. MSG can cause symptoms of dizziness, numbness in the area of the mouth, headaches and a general ill effect. The level allowed is acceptable based on a tentative report, and the FDA is currently studying this additive.

NITRATE - POTASSIUM AND SODIUM

Potassium nitrate is used as a color fixative in cured meat products, in pickling brine, and in chopped meat. Sodium nitrate is used as a color fixative in cured meats, frankfurters, bacon, uncooked smoked ham, bologna, meat spreads, potted meats, poultry and wild game. Nitrate combines with natural stomach and food substances – secondary amines – to cause powerful cancer causing agents called nitrosamines. Nitrates have caused deaths by cutting off oxygen to the brain. The additive is being studied and the FDA and the USDA want to lower the permissible level in some products. They are waiting for final data to determine safe levels.

NITRITE - POTASSIUM AND SODIUM

Potassium nitrite is used as a color fixative in cured meats. Sodium nitrite is used as a color fixative in cured meats, bacon, bologna, frankfurters, meat spreads, smoked cured tuna fish products, and in smoked cured shad and salmon. Some meat tenderizers contain almost pure sodium nitrite. Sodium nitrite also helps resist the growth of botulism spores which can cause spoilage. Nitrite combines with natural stomach and food chemicals, secondary amines, to produce powerful cancer causing agents called nitrosamines and nitrosamides. Deaths have been reported from excess sodium nitrite residue in food, and from the use of meat tenderizers. The FDA is testing sodium nitrite for cancer causing effects.

PCB - POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS

PCB is a compound of chemicals that has been used for industrial purposes since the 1930s. The largest users are in the electrical industry, but PCB has been used in carbonless paper which was recycled, and then used by the food industry for packaging food. When this chemical is washed into waters, it is absorbed by the fatty tissues of fish. Fish that are found in inland waters show more contamination than do fish in open waters, and fish near industrial sites show even higher levels of PCB. (Lake Michigan for example) The long term effects on human beings is the primary concern of the FDA. A few cases of human poisoning have been reported in Japan. The FDA has proposed to reduce the tolerance of PCB permitted in the environment.

SACCHARIN

Saccharin is a white crystalline powder with a bitter after taste. It is a compound made from toluence, which in turn is made from coal tar and from petroleum. It is 400 to 500 times as sweet as natural sugar, but contains no carbohydrates and has no food value. It is used as a sugar substitute

for diabetes and other sugar restricted diseases. Also it is used in diet soda and diet foods and is freely used by individuals dieting to lose weight. Tests have shown that saccharin is a cancer-causing agent. Saccharin was removed from the GRAS list to an interim list awaiting the findings of a Canadian study. On the basis of preliminary results, the FDA subsequently proposed that saccharin be banned from all food and beverages (which accounts for 90% of its use) and all ingestible cosmetics – for example, toothpaste. Saccharin will be permitted until the decision is finalized.

SORBITOL

Sorbitol is a white crystalline, sweet, water-soluble powder. It appears naturally in berries such as the mountain ash, cherries, plums, pears and apples. Sorbitol is a sugar substitute and is used in candy as a thickener and a stabilizer. It is also used as a sweetener in frozen desserts for special dietary purposes, and as a texturizing agent in dietetic fruits and soft drinks. It is used by diabetics, and has medical uses such as reducing body water. Sorbitol is a possible replacement for saccharin. When taken in excess, it can cause diarrhea and gastrointestinal disturbances. The FDA is conducting further studies on sorbitol.

SULFUR DIOXIDE

Sulfur dioxide fumes are used to keep dried fruits from fermenting and to keep other foods from spoiling. It is also an anti-browning agent in wine, corn syrup, dehydrated potatoes, soups and condiments. Sulfur dioxide destroys vitamin A. It is very poisonous, highly irritating, and inhalation produces respiratory irritation. This is on the GRAS list, but the FDA has asked for further studies.

VITAMINS

Vitamins are complex organic compounds which can be synthesized in laboratories and added to food for nutritional enrichment. The following names may appear on labels:

B vitamins Biotin, Pantothenic Acid, Choline, Thiamin, Folic Acid, Riboflavin, Niacin, Pyridoxine, Cyanocobalamin

A vitamins Retinal

C vitamins Ascorbic Acid

D vitamins Calciferol

E vitamins Tocopherol

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