

# FIVE SURPRISINGLY HEALTHY FOODS

*Everyday foods with  
surprising health benefits*

by

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Some foods' health benefits are shouted from the roof tops and make us feel smug every time we munch on them

Everyday foods such as green tea, chillies and chocolate have well-documented health benefits but there are some lesser-known healthy foods that haven't had the praise they deserve.

Until now. Here are five unlikely foods and drinks that can benefit health, when eaten as part of a balanced diet. Did you know about them?

## **Popcorn**



This fluffy snack has a lot more to offer than just something to nibble on at the cinema.

We've known for a while that popcorn is low in calories, but scientists have found some other benefits to eating it. Joe Vinson and his team from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania found that popcorn contains concentrated levels of antioxidants, due to its low water content.

However, popcorn toppings can contain hidden calories. Researchers stated that air-popped popcorn had the lowest calories, while microwave popcorn contained twice as many, and as much as 43 per cent fat. To get the most out of popcorn, go for the air-popped varieties without lots of salt, sugar or toffee glaze.

### **Black Tea**



Up until recently, green tea seemed to get all the ‘health’ headlines. But drinking black tea can also benefit your health too.

In one Iranian study, researchers found that participants who drank more than three cups of black tea daily had a 70 per cent lower risk of coronary artery disease. And a study carried out in the Netherlands found that just two servings of black tea per day improved brain function and focused attention. Better get the kettle on, then.

### **Coffee**



It’s refreshing, it wakes you up and too much of it might give you the shakes. But a 2012 study found that coffee could also help protect against certain forms of cancer.

The 26-year study found those who drank four or more cups of coffee each day were 50 per cent less likely to die from mouth or throat cancers. The researchers concluded by saying, ‘there may be beneficial effects to coffee, particularly caffeinated coffee and its daily enjoyment.’

But that’s not all. A joint study by the University of South Florida and the University of Miami found a link between drinking coffee and the onset of Alzheimer’s.

‘We are not saying that moderate coffee consumption will completely protect people from Alzheimer’s disease,’ lead author of the study Chuanhai Cao said, ‘however we firmly believe that moderate coffee consumption can appreciably reduce your risk of Alzheimer’s or delay its onset.’

## Eggs



For a long time, eggs tended to get a bad rep because of worries over cholesterol. But health experts now agree that it's saturated fat intake and not dietary cholesterol which we should watch for a healthy heart.

Eggs contain many vitamins and minerals that are essential to health, including folate, calcium, iron and selenium. They also help you feel fuller for longer and contain choline - important for memory and brain function, as well as helping to maintain a healthy liver.

## Cheese



In 2011, researchers at Copenhagen University studied the effects of a cheese-rich diet on levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol. They found that when people ate a set (but regular) amount of cheese for six weeks, their LDL cholesterol levels did not increase, and actually lowered when they switched from a butter-rich diet to eating cheese.

Researchers think that because cheese contains high levels of protein and calcium, our bodies find it easier to break down the cholesterol.

But, unfortunately, this isn't an excuse to suddenly eat lots of cheese - participants ate cheese instead of other fats in their diet, and not to excess. It's worth remembering that it is still a fatty food, and should be eaten in moderation.

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