

TEN
ANTI-AGING
SUPER-FOODS

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There are ten identified, anti-aging foods, namely:

- 1) Apples
- 2) Berries
- 3) Brazil nuts
- 4) Broccoli
- 5) Chocolate
- 6) Kiwi fruit
- 7) Linseed
- 8) Oats
- 9) Oily fish
- 10) Soya foods and soya milk

1) Apples

Apples are anti-ageing because they are one of the richest food sources of flavonols (powerful antioxidants) in our diet, contributing up to 10 per cent of our total intake. Quercetin, the main flavonol in apples, is associated with lower risk of blood clotting and strokes. Quercetin deactivates harmful free radicals, and helps prevent blood clotting and narrowing of the arteries. Apples also contain pectin (the gummy substance that sets jam), which helps to lower blood cholesterol levels, and to remove potentially carcinogenic (cancer-causing) toxins from the body.

2) Berries

Purple, dark red and blue berries, and dark cherries, are anti-ageing because they get their colour from the anti-oxidant flavonoid anthocyanin. Studies on bilberries show that berries may help strengthen the walls of small blood vessels, thus helping to prevent unsightly thread veins that occur with age.

3) Brazil nuts

Brazil nuts are the richest food source of selenium, which is an antioxidant enzyme that neutralises free radicals, and is regarded as an anti-cancer agent. Selenium is also needed by the thyroid gland for the use of iodine, and to help control hormone metabolism. Moreover, sperm production also requires selenium.

4) Broccoli

Together with other, dark green, leafy vegetables, broccoli is anti-ageing because, in diets where it is frequently eaten, it is consistently associated with a lower risk of cancer. Broccoli and other brassica vegetables contain a variety of phytochemicals:

- Some (phytochemicals) stimulate enzymes that make the hormone oestrogen less effective, and thus possibly reducing the risk of breast cancer.
- Some (phytochemicals) fight cancers by blocking the carcinogens before they reach their target sites, or by snatching the cancer-causing agents out of the attacked cells before they multiply and wreak havoc (particularly in breast and ovarian cancers).
- Some (phytochemicals) persuade pre-cancerous cells to commit suicide – this is a process called apoptosis.
- Some (phytochemicals) stimulate the production of enzymes of the body's natural defence system, which detoxifies cancer-causing chemicals in the liver.

5) Chocolate

Chocolate is not only one of life's great pleasures, but people who eat it (one to three times a month) cut their risk of early death by one third. This anti-ageing effect was illustrated in an eighty-year study of 7,800 Harvard graduates, which suggested that regular chocolate eaters (those who eat chocolate three times a week or more) live on average one extra year. Once-a-week chocolate eaters had a 15 per cent reduced risk of mortality, compared with a 25 per cent reduced risk in the higher consumers of chocolate. The possible longevity link may be because of 'phenols' (a type of anti-oxidant) that are found in chocolate. 40 grams of chocolate contains as many phenols as a glass of red wine. The phenols' anti-oxidant properties inhibit cancer and cholesterol build-up. However, moderation is key - chocolate contains mainly saturated fat which has the potential to cause blood cholesterol level to rise, and thereby increase the risk of heart disease.

6) Kiwi fruit

Kiwi fruit contains twice as much vitamin C as there is in oranges, and as much vitamin E as avocados - both vitamins (C and E) are powerful anti-aging nutrients. Kiwi fruit are also rich in potassium, and contain some folic acid.

7) Linseed

Linseed contains exceptionally high levels of lignans, which have similar benefits as that of the phyto-oestrogens in soya; however, they are weaker plant oestrogens. Where linseed-foods are eaten in greater quantity than soya-foods, they have more relevance and practical benefit. Speciality breads contain linseed, as do cereals. Some products, containing linseed, are specially manufactured and marketed for menopausal women who will benefit from their anti-ageing property. Packets of linseed can also be obtained from health food stores, and added to salads, cereals, and baking.

8) Oats

Oats rose to nutritional fame when oat products were permitted to make claims that their soluble-fibre content can help reduce blood cholesterol, if eaten on a regular basis as part of a well-balanced diet. The minimum an individual could get away with, for an anti-ageing effect, is around 35-45 grams per day. This amount would be found in a medium bowl of porridge (low sugar and fat) or a large flapjack (high sugar and fat). However, some studies have found that 150 grams, or more, per day is a much more effective. Oats reduce harmful LDL cholesterol, and are a good source of assimilable calcium.

9) Oily fish

Oily Fish, such as mackerel, herring, sardines, pilchards, salmon, and trout are one of the richest sources of protective omega-3 fatty acids. An individual needs to eat between 200 grams and 400 grams, or two oily fish meals a week, for anti-ageing benefits, which include lowering blood cholesterol and making blood less likely to clot - thus protecting against heart disease and stroke. The rate of fatal heart attacks is lower in people who eat fish regularly, compared with people who eat little or no fish.

10) Soya foods and soya milk

Soya foods and soya milk are anti-ageing because they contain isoflavones. These plant hormones are physically identical to the female sex hormone oestradiol, which is produced by the ovaries and adrenal glands. Studies suggest that by replacing oestradiol in the body, the individual is able to capitalise on the benefits of oestrogen protection against heart disease and osteoporosis, without unwanted side effects such as the triggering or the supporting of sex-hormone-related breast and prostate cancers.

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