

# Longevity-promoting foods

by Stephanie Raymond

Genes, stress, and environmental factors play a role in aging, but the key to a long, healthy life may be found in certain antiaging foods.



Packed with fibre, essential nutrients, and free radical-fighting antioxidants, the following foods may help put the brakes on aging when eaten regularly.

## Berries

A daily dose of berries may ward off DNA damage, certain cancers, and age-related cognitive decline. Berries' many healthy benefits are credited to their abundant antioxidants.

## Citrus fruit

Citrus fruits are excellent sources of vitamin C and tumour-inhibiting limonoids. In addition to helping prevent certain diseases, vitamin C is required to produce collagen—a protein essential for the maintenance of skin, tendons, and blood vessels.

## Cruciferous vegetables

Brimming with phytochemicals—that are thought to stimulate the enzymes that break down carcinogens as well as prevent cancerous cells from multiplying—crucifers such as broccoli, cabbage, and watercress are cancer-fighting superstars.

## Dark chocolate

The flavonols in this sweet treat may help to keep the heart young by keeping blood pressure low. One German study involving adults aged 35 to 65 found that those who consumed the most dark chocolate had lower blood pressure and lower risk of heart disease and strokes. The cocoa in chocolate contains the majority of the flavonols.

## Grapes

Red and purple grapes contain resveratrol, a plant phenol that may combat inflammation, ward off heart disease, and protect the brain from plaque formation

that leads to Alzheimer's disease. Resveratrol is also being studied in preliminary animal studies in regards to extending lifespan.

## **Nuts**

Packed full of mono- and polyunsaturated fatty acids, omega-3s, and arginine, (an amino acid that promotes proper blood vessel function) nuts make one heart-healthy snack. Almonds in particular are high in flavonoids and phenolics, which may reduce the oxidative stress that leads to heart disease.

## **Oily fish**

Oily fish such as salmon are abundant in omega-3s. In addition to warding off heart disease and several cancers, omega-3 fatty acids' anti-inflammatory properties may slow telomere shortening. Telomeres are DNA sequences that naturally shorten as cells regenerate. Slowing this process may slow aging.

## **Tomatoes**

Tomatoes are one of the few foods to contain lycopene—an antioxidant that is thought to protect against cardiovascular disease and cancer, and may even increase the skin's natural ability to filter out the sun's damaging rays. Cooking tomatoes in extra-virgin olive oil enhances the body's ability to absorb lycopene.

## **Whole grains**

Researchers from the National Cancer Institute have found that a diet rich in whole grain fibre may provide significant protection against dying prematurely from a number of ailments including heart disease, infectious disease, and pneumonia. The study found that dietary fibre lowered the risk of heart disease by 24 to 56 percent in men and 34 to 59 percent in women.

## **Yogurt**

A well-known source of bone-strengthening calcium and immune-boosting probiotic bacteria, yogurt may also contain trans-palmitoleic acid, according to researchers. This rare fatty acid has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes in preliminary studies.

Incorporating longevity-promoting foods into your diet is easy with the following recipes.

## **Recover faster with omega-3s**

Omega-3 fatty acids may reduce exercise-induced inflammation markers. A 2011 study in the *Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine* reported that participants who

supplemented with only 1.8 g of omega-3 fatty acid per day significantly reduced post-exercise inflammation up to 48 hours after exercise compared to those who did not. The Citrus, Spinach, and Salmon Salad is packed with over 3 g of omega-3s, so load up after a workout for reduced muscle soreness and inflammation