

DEVELOP THE ATHLETE FOOD GUIDE

THE ATHLETE'S GUIDE TO BETTER EATING

You're growing, so never go hungry!!!



The Power of Food

These foods will propel you toward your goals. They have been proven to do one or more of the following:

Build muscle

Fight cancer

Strengthen bone

Fight heart disease

Lower blood pressure

Improves immune function

1) Almonds and Other Nuts

Eat them with skins intact.

Superpowers

Building muscle, fighting food cravings

Secret weapons Protein, monounsaturated fats, vitamin E, folate (in peanuts), fiber, magnesium, and phosphorus

Fight against Obesity, heart disease, muscle loss, cancer

Sidekicks Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, avocados

Impostors Salted or smoked nuts. High sodium spikes blood pressure.

These days, you hear about good fats and bad fats. Oreos fall into the latter category, but nuts are clearly out to help you. They contain the monounsaturated fats that clear your arteries and help you feel full. All nuts are high in protein and monounsaturated fat. If you eat 2 ounces of almonds (about 24 of them), it can suppress your appetite--especially if you wash them down with 8 ounces of water.

2) Beans and Other Legumes

Including soybeans, chickpeas, pinto beans, navy beans, kidney beans, and lima beans.

Superpowers Building muscle, helping burn fat, regulating digestion

Secret weapons Fiber, protein, iron, folate

Fight against Obesity, colon cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure

Sidekicks Lentils, peas, bean dips, hummus, edamame

Impostors Refried beans, which are high in saturated fats; baked beans, which are high in sugar.

Beans are, as the famous rhyme says, good for your heart; the more you eat them, the more you'll be able to control your hunger. Black, lima, pinto, navy--you pick it. They're all low in fat, and they're packed with protein, fiber, and iron--nutrients crucial for building muscle and losing weight.

3) Spinach and Other Green Vegetables

Superpowers Neutralizing free radicals (molecules that accelerate the aging process)

Secret weapons Vitamins A, C, and K; folate; beta-carotene; minerals including calcium and magnesium; fiber

Fight against Cancer, heart disease, stroke, obesity, and osteoporosis

Sidekicks Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli and Brussels sprouts; green, yellow, red, and orange vegetables such as asparagus, peppers, and yellow beans

Impostors None, as long as you don't fry them or smother them in fatty cheese sauces.

You know vegetables are packed with important nutrients, but they're also a critical part of your nutritional plan. Spinach in particular in one serving supplies nearly a full day's vitamin A and half of your vitamin C. It's also loaded with folate--a vitamin that protects against heart disease, stroke, and colon cancer. Dress a sandwich with the stuff, or stir-fry it with fresh garlic and olive oil. Broccoli is high in fiber and more densely packed with vitamins and minerals than almost any other food. If you hate vegetables, hide them. Puree them and add them to marinara sauce or chili. The more you chop, the less you taste, and the easier it is for your body to absorb nutrients.

4) Dairy Products (Soy milk as an alternative, for those who are lactose intolerant)

Fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese, and cottage cheese.

Superpowers Building strong bones, firing up weight loss

Secret weapons Calcium, vitamins A and B12, riboflavin, phosphorus, potassium

Fight against Osteoporosis, obesity, high blood pressure, cancer

Sidekicks Soy

Impostors Whole milk, frozen yogurt

Low-fat yogurt, cheeses, and other dairy products can play a key role in your diet. Milk is a major source of calcium. Liquids take up lots of room in your stomach, so your brain gets the signal that you're full.

5) Oatmeal

Unsweetened, unflavored. But do add a little brown sugar or honey to flavor and all the fruit you want!

Superpowers Boosting energy, reducing cholesterol, maintaining blood-sugar levels

Secret weapons Complex carbohydrates and fiber

Fights against Heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, obesity

Sidekicks High-fiber cereals like All-Bran and Fiber One

Impostors Sugary cereals

Oatmeal can propel you through sluggish mornings, and you can down a bowl a couple of hours before a workout to feel fully energized by the time you hit the weights, or at night to avoid a late-night binge. It couldn't be easier to prepare--just add water. Buy the unsweetened, unflavored variety and use other Power Foods such as milk and berries to enhance the taste. Oatmeal contains soluble fiber, meaning that it attracts fluid and stays in your stomach longer than insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber helps remove LDL cholesterol from your circulatory system.

6) Eggs

Superpowers Building muscle, burning fat

Secret weapons Protein, vitamins A and B12

Fight against Obesity

Sidekicks Egg Beaters, which have fewer calories than eggs and no fat, but just as much of the core nutrients

Impostors None

More and more research shows that eating an egg or two a day will not raise your cholesterol levels, so drop the yolk and have a 3 or 4 egg white, with one yolk, omelet. In fact, we've learned that most blood cholesterol is made by the body from dietary fat, not dietary cholesterol. That's why you should take advantage of eggs and their powerful makeup of protein. The protein found in eggs has the highest "biological value" of protein--a measure of how well it supports your body's protein need--of any food. In other words, the protein in eggs is more effective at building muscle than protein from other sources, even milk and beef. Eggs also contain vitamin B12, which is necessary for fat breakdown.

7) Turkey and Other Lean Meats

Lean steak, chicken, fish.

Superpowers Building muscle, improving the immune system

Secret weapons Protein, iron, zinc, creatine (beef), omega-3 fatty acids (fish), vitamins B6 (chicken and fish) and B12, phosphorus, potassium

Fight against Obesity, mood disorders, memory loss, heart disease

Sidekicks Shellfish, Canadian bacon, omega-3 rich flaxseed

Impostors Sausage, bacon, cured meats, ham, fatty cuts of steak like T-bone and rib eye

A classic muscle-building nutrient, protein is the base of any solid diet plan. Turkey breast is one of the leanest meats you'll find, and it packs nearly one-third of your daily requirements of niacin and vitamin B6. Beef, another classic muscle-building protein, is the top food source of creatine--a substance your body uses to make new muscle fibers. Look for round or loin cuts (code for extra-lean); New York strip is less fatty than prime rib. To cut down on saturated fats even more, concentrate on fish like tuna and salmon, because they contain a healthy dose of omega-3 fatty acids as well as protein. **A bonus benefit:**

Researchers in Stockholm found that men who ate no fish had three times the risk of prostate cancer of those who ate it regularly. It's the omega-3s that inhibit prostate-cancer growth.

8) Peanut Butter (All-natural, sugar-free. The ingredient list should read as follows: Peanuts, (sea) salt. NOTHING ELSE)

Superpowers Boosting testosterone, building muscle, burning fat

Secret weapons Protein, monounsaturated fat, vitamin E, niacin, magnesium

Fights against Obesity, muscle loss, wrinkles, cardiovascular disease

Sidekicks Cashew and almond butters

Impostors Mass-produced sugary and trans fatty peanut butter

Yes, PB has its disadvantages: It's high in calories, and it isn't served in four-star restaurants. But it's packed with heart-healthy monounsaturated fats that can increase your body's production of testosterone, which can help muscles grow and fat melt. Three tablespoons a day should guarantee the benefit without overloading on the fat.

9) Olive Oil

Superpowers Lowering cholesterol, boosting the immune system

Secret weapons Monounsaturated fat, vitamin E

Fights against Obesity, cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure

Sidekicks Canola oil, peanut oil, sesame oil

Impostors Other vegetable and hydrogenated vegetable oils, trans fatty acids, margarine

No need for a long explanation here: Olive oil and its brethren will help control your food cravings; they'll also help you burn fat and keep your cholesterol in check.

10) Whole-Grain Breads and Cereals

Superpowers Preventing your body from storing fat

Secret weapons Fiber, protein, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin E, calcium, magnesium, potassium, zinc

Fight against Obesity, cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease

Sidekicks Brown rice, whole-wheat pretzels, whole-wheat pastas

Impostors Processed products like white bread, bagels, and doughnuts; breads labeled wheat instead of whole wheat

There's only so long a person can survive on an all-protein diet or an all-salad diet or an all-anything diet. You crave carbohydrates because your body needs them, especially young athletes!!! The key is to eat the ones that have all their heart-healthy, belly-melting fiber intact. Whole-grain carbohydrates can play an important role in a healthy lifestyle. Whole-grain bread keeps insulin levels low, which keeps you from storing fat.

11) Raspberries and Other Berries

Superpowers Protecting your heart, enhancing eyesight, improving memory, preventing cravings

Secret weapons Antioxidants, fiber, vitamin C, tannins (cranberries)

Fight against Heart disease, cancer, obesity

Sidekicks Most other fruits, especially apples and grapefruit

Impostors Sugary jellies

Raspberries, are great for their power as well as for their flavor. One cup packs 6 grams of fiber and more than half of your daily requirement of vitamin C. Blueberries are one of the most healthful foods you can eat. They beat out 39 other fruits and vegetables in the antioxidant-power ratings. And strawberries (along with grapefruit, peaches, apples, and oranges) contain another valuable form of fiber called pectin that can make you feel fuller for hours.

12) Water, Juice and other good Beverages

Superpowers Nearly 75% of your body is water, keep it running efficiently. Water, like oil in a car, keeps everything moving smoothly and operating at its highest capacity.

Fights against Fatigue. Times when you feel tired, you may just be dehydrated. Fends off sickness and much more.

Sidekicks All natural/Organic fruit juices with NO added sugar, syrup, etc...

Impostors Soda/Juices with High Fructose Corn Syrup or Syrup of any kind. Ingredients in juices should read one line only with nothing more than fruits added and possibly added vitamin enrichment.

You'll notice that there are no supplements or mass produced foods here. I encourage everyone, including parents and siblings to use this as a framework for better eating. I know it is hard to give up those sweets, salty foods and fast foods for instance so make it a treat and leave those foods out of the house so you have to go get an ice cream down the street or take the time to drive to the grocery store to pick up the ingredients. I am not telling you to give up everything that is "bad" but rather make it that once a week or every other week treat that you splurge on

Lastly, I do recommend for the growing athlete, especially the ones that participate in a great deal of athletic competition to discuss with their Physician the option of adding whey protein to a young man's or woman's diet (as well as adults). It is a great, low calorie snack (post workout drink) that is crucial for recovery. Find your flavor (chocolate, vanilla or strawberry) and add water (or do half water and half milk/soymilk).