

PLANET ORGANIC

SUPERFOODS

Superfoods are said to boost your mood and keep you looking young, well nourished and healthy. Mostly fruit and vegetables they are full to the brim with health-giving nutrients – vitamins, minerals and antioxidants which fight disease. They are usually low in calories and can be included in your diet on a daily basis to give you energy and keep you fit.

There may be some superfoods that are new to us in the west like Goji and Acai berries, but there are plenty of familiar favourites too such as broccoli, onions, tomatoes and watercress. They all taste great whether they're for eating raw in salads, adding to smoothies and juices or cooking as part of a larger dish.

Acai berries

The dark purple fruits or berries of the Acai palm are usually pulped and frozen or juiced. In terms of nutrients they don't bear comparison with any other fruit as they contain more antioxidants and are heralded as 'anti-ageing' superfoods.

Acai berries contain a whole host of vitamins that keep skin, hair and nails looking good and young – Vitamin C for reducing ageing effects of the sun, Vitamin B2 for skin, hair and nails, Vitamin A that helps problem skin such as acne, and E for healthy skin. Zinc too keeps skin clear, and hair and nails in fine form. They have high levels of the essential fats, Omega 6 for improving memory and ensuring good mental health, valuable dietary fibres, amino acids, and trace minerals.

Planet Organic sells Acai berry drinks or freeze dried Acai powder which you can add to smoothies, juices and porridge.

Alfalfa

Alfalfa sprouts are defined as living foods and are full of enzymes, complete proteins, Vitamin A for healthy eyes, Vitamin B which is essential for the nervous system and the brain, C to fight infection and E to keep skin looking good. They are also rich in calcium and phosphorus for healthy bones, magnesium for building new cells and proteins, iron for manufacturing red blood cells, potassium for building muscle and silicon for strong nails and shiny hair.

You can buy fresh alfalfa sprouts in our Fruit and Vegetable Department or you can buy your own seeds from Planet Organic stores to sprout on the kitchen windowsill. While they enhance a salad or sandwich alfalfa is so good for you that just putting a sprinkling on hot and cold meals adds nutritional value.

Blueberries

Also known as bilberries, like all berries, blueberries are rich in antioxidants such as Vitamin C making them good for fighting cancer and other serious disease, keeping skin healthy and boosting the immune system.

The flavonoids in blueberries strengthen blood capillaries and improve circulation. This may account for the anecdote about British fighter pilots who were said to eat blueberries before night bombing raids over Germany in World War II to improve their night vision.

Find fresh organic blueberries in store from April to September or you can try frozen, dried and juiced blueberries.

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Brazil nuts

Brazil nuts have all the components of 'anti-ageing' foods. They are a great source of Omega 3s, 6s and 9s making them good for healthy skin, shiny hair and keeping the memory sharp. They are high in fibre and protein, rich in Vitamin E that keeps the skin in good shape, and calcium and magnesium for healthy bones and muscles. There is also plenty of selenium which works with Vitamin E to neutralise free radicals that cause disease, and which is particularly important for men because it helps to produce healthy sperm. It also relieves menopausal symptoms for women and can protect against serious illness.

You can eat them on their own, include them in a dessert, make a nut roast or chop them up with sunflower and pumpkin seeds and add them to your morning bowl of muesli.

Broccoli

Only recently did people recognise that one of the most commonly eaten vegetables was so good for you. It is particularly high in beta-carotene which fights toxins in the body and can promote healthy eyes and heart. It's a great source of Vitamin C which boosts immunity and keeps skin healthy, and is complemented by Vitamin A which is helpful for skin problems. It is also a great source of fibre and is high in calcium so for vegans it's an excellent substitute for dairy to keep bones healthy and prevent osteoporosis.

Broccoli's available all year round so at any time you can make broccoli soup, eat it as an accompanying vegetable or with a cheese sauce like cauliflower cheese.

Chicory

Often called by its French name – endives – it is a prebiotic which provides the right environment in the intestines for probiotics (healthy bacteria) to flourish. Chicory is full of antioxidant Vitamins C and E for healthy skin and to keep you healthy, Vitamin A for good eye and skin health, folic acid which is involved in protecting the nervous system particularly for unborn babies, and manufacturing red blood cells like iron which is also present in chicory.

It's only around in spring but is great raw for salads or with vinaigrette for a starter, or as a vegetable with a difference.

Cocoa nibs

Cocoa (cacao) beans are broken into small pieces or nibs and eaten raw. They are high in antioxidants which fight free radicals, sulphur which is needed for healthy skin, hair and nails, magnesium which helps all functions in the body, provides energy and helps to relax muscles. Cacao also contains phenylethylamine and anandamine – chemicals which make us feel happy and in love, but without the calories of chocolate!

Of course without the sugar they don't taste like chocolate. They are an acquired taste and can be chewed raw or used to enhance smoothies.

Cranberries

In the last few years cranberry juice has become a socially acceptable drink that you can buy at any bar. It is also well known for easing cystitis and other bladder infections because cranberries contain PACs (proanthocyanidins) that attach themselves to bacteria like E-coli and prevent it from attaching to the lining of the bladder. Cranberry juice and supplements are also helpful for easing digestive problems too.

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Cranberries are available fresh and frozen in store in late Autumn and for Christmas but we also stock cranberry juice, dried berries and cranberry food supplements.

Garlic

Garlic is one of the ultimate superfoods as it has antibiotic, antiseptic and antiviral properties. It boosts the immune system, fights viruses and infection, lowers cholesterol, improves kidney function, helps fight colds, flu and respiratory infection – and is even more powerful raw, but not very sociable!

The key ingredient in garlic is allicin, a sulphur compound, which is released when you crush garlic cloves. It is responsible for lowering bad cholesterol levels, detoxifying the body and is a natural anti-inflammatory. It is also high in sulphur which keeps skin, hair and nails looking great.

You can make some tzatziki with plain yoghurt, grated cucumber, a drop of olive oil and crushed raw garlic. You can use garlic in casseroles, stir fries, curries and pasta dishes or tuck it into the skin of a roasting chicken.

Ginger

Ginger is a must-have in any kitchen because its active ingredient – gingerol - can help to ease a cold, relieve aches and pains and reduce nausea and even morning sickness. It is high in antioxidants and has anti-inflammatory properties which makes it good for arthritis and improving the circulation. It can also aid the absorption of nutrients, lower cholesterol and regulate blood sugar.

The fresh root can be used to make a tea - just peel an inch of ginger root and grate into a warmed teapot. The Chinese claim it's a good warming food, particularly good in winter, and can be cooked in curries, tagine, or added to stir fries.

Goji berries

Recognised in Chinese herbal medicine for many years Goji berries have now shot to fame here. Picked from the Goji bush in the Himalayas the berries have the highest content of cancer-fighting beta-carotene than any other fruit. They are said to be one of the richest sources of Vitamin C on the planet to fight infection and keep skin healthy, and they contain Vitamins B1, B2, B6 and Vitamin E and Omega 3 and 6 essential fatty acids, that are required for healthy brain and nervous system development.

They contain 18 amino acids and up to 21 essential minerals and are particularly high in iron which manufactures red blood cells, prevents anaemia and releases energy into the body. They are therefore an all-round superfood providing all the nutrients required to be in optimum health.

Goji berries are honoured by Tibetan monks and have been used in oriental medicine for thousands of years. They can be chewed, soaked, added to muesli or eaten on porridge.

Green, White and Oolong tea

The benefits of **green tea** are well recognised and its phenolic compounds have been attributed with strengthening blood vessels, while the Vitamin E content helps to protect skin, eyes and heart. The antioxidant bioflavonoids are said to be anti-ageing lowering bad cholesterol and protecting you from circulatory problems and heart disease.

If green tea comes from the early picked tea leaves, **white tea** is made from the youngest shoots of the same plant. Both are high in antioxidants but white tea can be easier to drink as it isn't at all bitter. On the other hand **oolong** tea is partially fermented, the leaves are heat dried but not fully roasted – a bit

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more like black tea - but with all the goodness held in. It is claimed to be good for losing weight as it has the detoxifying action of green tea, but like black tea its caffeine content speeds up the metabolism.

Kale

Recently championed in the media as the latest superfood, kale is a member of the cabbage family and is prevalent in the autumn. It contains more calcium for healthy bones and iron for building red blood cells than most other vegetables. Kale is also high in the antioxidant bioflavonoids that fight disease by neutralising free radicals.

It is also a rich source of Vitamin C that helps the body to absorb these minerals as well as sulphur that keeps skin, hair and nails in healthy form, and beta-carotene that is converted to Vitamin A, also good for the skin and eyes.

Kale is an excellent winter vegetable that can be stir-fried, steamed or simmered in soups.

Oats

Renowned for their cholesterol lowering properties oats release energy slowly because they are high in complex carbohydrates and soluble fibre – they have a low Glycaemic Load (GL) (see Information Sheet on [Glycaemic Load](#)). So a bowl of porridge in the morning keeps hunger at bay until lunchtime.

Oats contain silicon for healthy hair, nails, skin and bones, potassium and magnesium for healthy bones and muscles, and a full range of B vitamins for all round health. Rich in protein oats have more oil than other cereals particularly those grown in warmer climates.

They can be eaten for breakfast as porridge or in muesli, added to savoury toppings and cooked in flapjacks.

Onions

One of the best foods you can eat, onions contain quercetin which is both anti-inflammatory and anti-carcinogenic. Eating onions can help to lower cholesterol and relieve colds and stomach problems. They contain B vitamins which are vital to health, immune-boosting selenium that cleanses the liver, potassium that is required for building muscle and healthy growth, and silicon and sulphur that ensure healthy looking skin, hair and nails.

Onions can adorn any dish – hot or cold, adding strong flavour and excellent taste. You can eat them raw in salads, sandwiches, in dips like tzatziki or include them in a variety of meat or vegetarian dishes.

Pomegranates

Recently pomegranates became the flavour of the month because they are packed with polyphenols, an antioxidant known for fighting cancer – particularly of the prostate -Vitamin C which fights infection and keeps skin healthy, and potassium which is instrumental in the healthy function of the nervous system and muscles.

When it's in season in October and November you can eat the whole fruit, but Pomegranate Juice is available in store all year round.

Spinach

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Known as an excellent source of iron which prevents anaemia by manufacturing red blood cells and generates energy, spinach is also full of other nourishing vitamins and minerals. Folic acid also manufactures red blood cells and is essential for developing a healthy nervous system and is therefore given to pregnant women for their growing unborn babies.

Spinach is also high in potassium which helps to build healthy bones and muscles, beta-carotene which protects skin from the sun and can be converted to Vitamin A in the body, and lutein which helps to keep eyes functioning well.

Spinach is at its best from July to October. Eat raw in salads or cook as an accompanying vegetable or just add to soups, lasagne, shepherds pie, and pasta dishes.

Strawberries

Like all berries strawberries are abundant in Vitamin C which is great for fighting infection, preventing free radical damage to skin by the sun, and helps to keep skin elastic. They also contain ellagic acid, which is a phytochemical said to fight cancer, Vitamin B6 that helps to ease PMT and folic acid which is essential for the nervous system, especially in the unborn child.

Strawberries have a low GL value (see [Glycaemic Load](#)) when eaten fresh and raw. The best organic British strawberries are available only in summer months – in time for Wimbledon, and they make a great accompaniment to any dessert, can be eaten fresh with yoghurt or ice cream, in fruit salads, summer pudding or in smoothies.

Sunflower seeds

All seeds are good for a healthy diet and sunflower seeds contain the essential Omega 6 fats which are good for boosting the memory, keeping mentally healthy and fighting inflammation like arthritis. They are also high in B vitamins which cover most functions of the body, calcium and magnesium which work together to make bones and muscles strong and healthy.

You can eat sunflower seeds as a healthy snack, buy them combined with other seeds and add to salads or muesli. They are particularly recommended with other seeds to help women experiencing menopausal symptoms.

Sweet potatoes

An excellent source of fibre sweet potatoes were unheard of in the UK 30 years ago, but are now a popular root vegetable. They are high in beta-carotene which gives them their yellow/pink colour and is good for the eyes, lungs and immune system. They are also abundant in antioxidants for fighting disease including Vitamin C which fights colds and flu and keeps skin healthy and Vitamin E which also encourages good skin, eyes and memory.

You can mash sweet potatoes for a change from normal ones, roast them with Sunday joints or make a vegetable dish with other root vegetables such as turnips, swede, and parsnips.

Tomatoes

The versatile tomato is very high in antioxidants with Vitamin C which fights infection and makes skin healthy, Vitamin E for healthy skin and Vitamin B3 (niacin) that breaks down food to release energy, creates hormones, enhances brain function and keeps the skin and digestive tract healthy.

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Tomatoes hit the headlines a few years ago when it was discovered that the carotenoid ingredient lycopene was anti-carcinogenic and neutralises free radicals that cause cancer. It was claimed that cooked tomatoes could help to protect men against prostate cancer.

A cooking staple tomatoes can be used or added to many dishes but are an integral ingredient of Bolognese, lasagne, and many other pasta dishes, as well as being an essential component of salads.

Watercress

Overlooked for many years in favour of mustard and cress, watercress is now known to contain a range of nourishing minerals and be an excellent health tonic. It contains iron for building red blood cells and preventing anaemia, calcium for healthy bones, iodine to prevent thyroid problems, and magnesium for providing energy and healthy muscles as well as many other functions.

Watercress is also a rich source of Vitamin C which helps to regenerate skin cells, keep the liver healthy and fight illnesses, Vitamin B3 for releasing energy from food, healthy skin and digestive tract, and Vitamin B6 for healthy nerves and relief of PMT. It helps to digest fat and encourages the liver to detoxify.

Its strong delicious taste makes it an ideal addition to salads and sandwiches, but it can also make a great soup when cooked with onions.