

Can't afford the latest exotic superfoods? Heart-healing superfoods are readily available and very affordable!

Almonds Skip the unhealthy chips or popcorn with artificial butter-like topping. Instead snack on almonds. Their monounsaturated fats cut LDL while increasing HDL cholesterol (think L for lousy and H for healthy). They're also packed with essential artery-protecting vitamin E and heart-boosting minerals calcium and magnesium. Choose raw, unsalted almonds, preferably soaked overnight or for a few hours in water to increase their nutrient content and remove enzyme inhibitors.

Apples Rich in the flavonoid quercetin, apples not only eliminate harmful free radicals from the bloodstream, they are a rich source of soluble fiber called pectin. Pectin binds to excessive amounts of LDL cholesterol and escorts it out of the body.

Blueberries Rich in "natural aspirin" (salicylic acid) without the harmful side-effects, blueberries are also high in natural anthocyanins and catechins. Both of these important phytonutrients help restore healthy body weight and decrease inflammation, including within the blood vessels.

Carrots The humble carrot has almost been forgotten about in light of new superfood discoveries. However, it is still a great heart-healthy superfood. Containing high amounts of beta-carotene (an antioxidant that is a precursor to vitamin A in the body and protects against harmful artery-damaging free radicals), carrots are also high in homocysteine-lowering folate (vitamin B9) as well as many other nutrients.

Raw Flaxseeds Rich in anti-inflammatory and heart-healing Omega 3 fatty acids, ground flaxseeds and flaxseed oil are excellent additions to ward off heart disease. Research shows that flaxseeds reduce the incidence of arteriosclerosis. Use a coffee grinder to grind flaxseeds, add to smoothies, top salads, waffles or pancakes. Flaxseed oil should be refrigerated and not heated. Add flaxseed oil and a little unrefined sea salt to cooked sweet potatoes, steamed vegetables and drizzled on a salad.

Garlic helps lower excess cholesterol, balance blood pressure and is an all-around great food for the heart. Try to get at least one clove of garlic in your diet every day. Raw is best but cooked garlic is still beneficial.

Legumes (black beans, chickpeas, kidney beans and other beans) Research shows that eating beans four times a week reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and heart attacks. They are delicious added to soups, stews, curries, waffles or atop salads.

Oatmeal (or brown rice, millet and quinoa) Packed with fiber that binds to excessive amounts of cholesterol and toxins, oatmeal is a great heart health superfood. Brown rice, millet and quinoa have the same heart health benefits and are gluten free.

Salmon (Wild) and other fatty fish like mackerel, herring and sardines contain omega-3 fatty acids, which reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease by making platelets less likely to clump, blood vessels less likely to constrict, and by reducing the amount of triglycerides damaging blood fats linked to heart disease. Keep in mind that farmed fish are often high in mercury and other toxins.

Spinach & Leafy Greens High in B-complex vitamins, including vitamin B6, B12, and folate - all of which are essential for normal homocysteine levels. Homocysteine is a type of protein that is produced by the body and found in the blood, ideally in low levels. Kilmer McCully, MD who first discovered the substance, views cholesterol as a symptom of heart disease, not its cause. Instead he views homocysteine as the cause, a view that many other health and nutrition experts now share. Regardless, spinach and leafy greens will help you get homocysteine under control.

Walnuts Rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, help to prevent blood clots and reduce inflammation in the cardiovascular system. Walnuts also help relax constricted blood vessels, making them a great heart health superfood. Since Omega-3s are vulnerable to light and heat, choose raw, unsalted walnuts in the refrigerator section of your health food store. Even if you don't like walnuts, you may be surprised at how delicious and buttery-tasting fresh raw ones are.

Watermelon Rich in lycopene and blood-pressure-regulating potassium, watermelon is an excellent choice for heart health year round. Lycopene is a phytonutrient, a potent free radical scavenger and even protects genetic material against damage and disease.

Source: care2.com/greenliving/valentines-day-heart-healing-superfoods