

Your Guide to Nutrients in Heart-Healthy Foods

Phytoestrogens are substances in plants (like flaxseed) that have a weak estrogen-like action in the body. Studies suggest that flaxseed lowers the risk of blood clots, stroke, and cardiac arrhythmias. It may also help lower total and LDL "bad" cholesterol and triglycerides, and even blood pressure.

Phytosterols are plant sterols that chemically resemble cholesterol -- and seem to reduce blood cholesterol. All nuts and seeds, including wheat germ, have phytosterols.

Carotenoids are heart-protective antioxidants in many colorful fruits and veggies. Alphacarotene, beta-carotene, lutein, and lycopene are carotenoids.

Polyphenols are another set of antioxidants that protect blood vessels, lower blood pressure, reduce LDL "bad" cholesterol. **Flavonoid** polyphenols include catechins, flavonones, flavonols, isoflavones, resveratrol, and anthocyanins. **Non-flavonoid** polyphenols include ellagic acid (found in all types of berries).

Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fatty fish like salmon) and **alpha-linolenic fatty acids** (found in plant foods like walnuts) help boost the immune system, reduce blood clots, and protect against heart attacks. They also increase good HDL levels, lower triglyceride levels, protect arteries from plaque buildup, are anti-inflammatories, and lower blood pressure.

B-complex vitamins -- like **Vitamin B-12 (folate)** and vitamin B-6 -- protect against blood clots and atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries. **Niacin (vitamin B-3)** helps increase HDL "good" cholesterol.

Vitamins C and E are antioxidants that protect cells from free radical damage. Magnesium, potassium, and calcium help lower blood pressure. Fiber-rich foods help lower cholesterol levels.

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25 Top Heart Healthy Foods

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1. **Salmon**
Omega-3 fatty acids.
Grill salmon with a yummy rub or marinade.
2. **Flaxseed (ground)**
Omega-3 fatty acids; fiber, phytoestrogens.
Ground flaxseed hides easily in all sorts of foods
3. **Oatmeal**
Omega-3 fatty acids; magnesium; potassium; folate; niacin; calcium; soluble fiber.
4. **Black or Kidney Beans**
B-complex vitamins; niacin; folate; magnesium; omega-3 fatty acids; calcium; soluble fiber.
5. **Almonds**
Plant omega-3 fatty acids; vitamin E; magnesium; fiber; heart-favorable mono- and polyunsaturated fats; phytosterols.
6. **Walnuts**
Plant omega-3 fatty acids; vitamin E; magnesium; folate; fiber; heart-favorable mono- and polyunsaturated fats; phytosterols.
7. **Red wine**
Catechins and resveratrol (flavonoids).
8. **Tuna**
Omega-3 fatty acids; folate; niacin.
9. **Tofu**
Niacin; folate; calcium; magnesium; potassium.
10. **Brown rice**
B-complex vitamins; fiber; niacin; magnesium.
13. **Soy milk**
Isoflavones (a flavonoid); B-complex vitamins; niacin; folate, calcium; magnesium; potassium; phytoestrogens.
14. **Blueberries**
Beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); anthocyanin (a flavonoid); ellagic acid (a polyphenol); vitamin C; folate; calcium, magnesium; potassium; fiber. Cranberries, strawberries, raspberries are potent, too
15. **Carrots**
Alpha-carotene (a carotenoid); fiber.
16. **Spinach**
Lutein (a carotenoid); B-complex vitamins; folate; magnesium; potassium; calcium; fiber.
17. **Broccoli**
Beta-carotene (a carotenoid); Vitamins C and E; potassium; folate; calcium; fiber.
18. **Sweet potato**
Beta-carotene (a carotenoid); vitamins A, C, E; fiber.
19. **Red bell peppers**
Beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); B-complex vitamins; folate; potassium; fiber.
20. **Asparagus**
Beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); B-complex vitamins; folate; fiber.
11. **Oranges**
Beta-cryptoxanthin, beta- and alpha-carotene, lutein (carotenoids) and flavones (flavonoids); vitamin C; potassium; folate; fiber.
12. **Tomatoes**
Beta- and alpha-carotene, lycopene, lutein (carotenoids); vitamin C; potassium; folate; fiber.
21. **Acorn squash**
Beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); B-complex and C vitamins; folate; calcium; magnesium; potassium; fiber.
22. **Cantaloupe**
Alpha- and beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); B-complex and C vitamins; folate; potassium; fiber.
23. **Papaya**
Beta-carotene, beta-cryptoxanthin, lutein (carotenoids); Vitamins C and E; folate; calcium; magnesium; potassium.
24. **Dark chocolate**
Resveratrol and cocoa phenols (flavonoids).
A truffle a day lowers blood pressure, but choose 70% or higher cocoa content.
25. **Tea**
Catechins and flavonols (flavonoids).