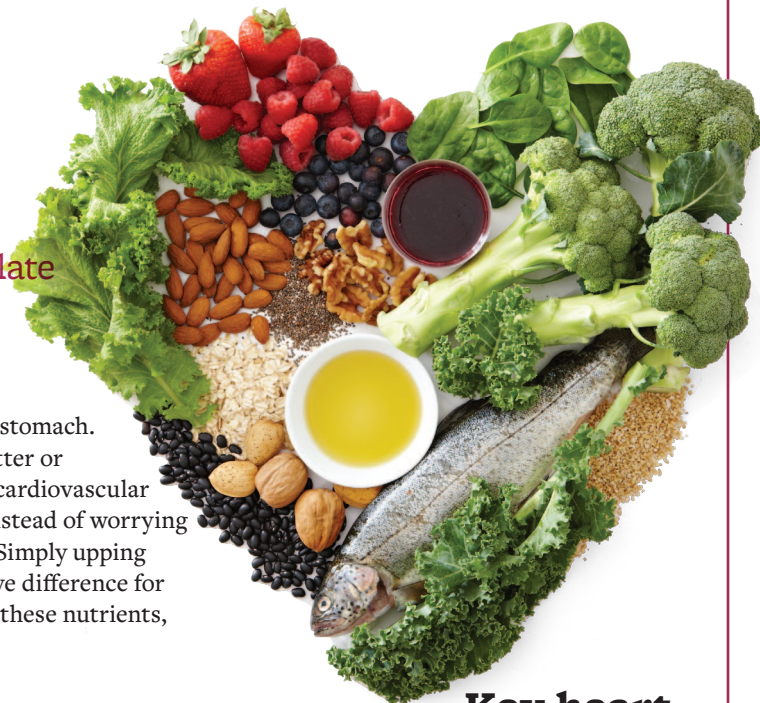


# Power foods

Put these super selections on your plate for a ticker that doesn't miss a beat.

BY MARSHA McCULLOCH, R.D. | PHOTO MARTY BALDWIN



It's official: The way to one's heart really is through the stomach. Countless studies have shown that what we eat—for better or worse—has a major impact on a host of risk factors for cardiovascular disease, including high cholesterol and hypertension. Instead of worrying about what you *shouldn't* eat, focus on what you *should*. Simply upping your intake of a few critical nutrients can make a positive difference for your heart. Read on for a guide to 10 foods that provide these nutrients, and learn exactly why they're good for you.

**BERRIES** Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries—they're all heart-healthy gems. Out of season, buy them frozen, microwave until warm, and spoon onto oatmeal, crepes, and even grilled meat.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, fiber, phytonutrients.

**CHIA SEEDS** They're not just for novelty planters. These tiny seeds are essentially flavorless and don't require grinding, making them an easy addition to anything from rice pilaf to lean burger patties.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, fiber, electrolytes, phytonutrients, unsaturated fats.

**BROCCOLI** Broccoli loses nutrients when boiled or left too long in the fridge, so try it steamed or roasted until crisp-tender, ideally within a few days of buying it.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, fiber, electrolytes, phytonutrients.

**FISH** Get hooked on wild salmon, herring, and rainbow trout, three great catches that are low in contaminants. To please picky eaters, slip fish into favorite dishes such as tacos.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, unsaturated fats.

**DARK GREENS** Leafy picks such as kale, collard greens, and mustard greens are especially nutritious when steamed. Serve them with a splash of vinaigrette, or chop and use them as a quick nutrition booster in dishes such as baked ziti and meat loaf.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, fiber, electrolytes, phytonutrients.

**BEANS** Here's a sweet tip: Next time you're craving brownies, drain, rinse, and puree a 15-oz. can of black beans with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water and use in place of eggs and oil. Only your heart will notice the swap.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, fiber, electrolytes, phytonutrients.

**NUTS** For the biggest dose of phytonutrients, nibble whole nuts that have their papery skins intact, such as almonds and walnuts. To control calories, keep each serving to about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, fiber, electrolytes, phytonutrients, unsaturated fats.

**OATS** In almost any form, this whole grain lowers bad cholesterol and helps control appetite. Try nutty steel-cut oats in a pilaf or use oat flour to replace a quarter of the all-purpose flour in recipes.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, fiber, electrolytes, phytonutrients.

**OLIVE OIL** This kitchen staple has a low smoke point—also the point at which its nutrients begin to break down—so when you're using it in a hot dish, add it at the end of cooking.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, phytonutrients, unsaturated fats.

**PURE POMEGRANATE JUICE** Add this sweet-tart juice to sparkling water, or blend it with berries and low-fat yogurt for a perfect smoothie. It has three times the antioxidant power of red wine.

**GOOD SOURCE OF** antioxidants, electrolytes, phytonutrients. ■

## Key heart nutrients

**Antioxidants** protect the heart and blood vessels from harmful free radicals. Vitamins A, C, and E, as well as the mineral selenium, are some of the antioxidants found in the foods listed at left.

**Fiber** reduces levels of harmful LDL cholesterol and might ease chronic inflammation, a contributor to atherosclerosis.

**Electrolytes** help ensure steady blood pressure and a healthy heart rhythm. They include potassium, magnesium, and calcium.

**Phytonutrients** are plant compounds that protect arteries from inflammation and help ward off blood clots.

**Unsaturated fats** reduce inflammation and promote healthy cholesterol levels. Monounsaturated fats and omega-3s are two you'll find in these foods.