



**BACKGROUND:** Research shows that dietary habits influence disease risk. While certain foods trigger chronic health conditions, others offer strong medicinal and protective qualities. However, diet alone should not replace medicine in most circumstances. Many illnesses can be prevented, treated, or even cured by dietary and lifestyle changes, many others cannot. Eating whole, nutritious foods is important because their unique substances work together to create an effect that can't be replicated by taking a supplement. Although your body only needs small amounts of vitamins and minerals, they're vital for your health. Insufficient intakes of vitamin C, vitamin D, and folate may harm your heart, cause immune dysfunction, and increase your risk of certain cancers. Nutritious foods, including vegetables, fruits, beans, and grains, boast numerous beneficial compounds, such as antioxidants which protect cells from damage that may otherwise lead to disease. Fiber is also an essential part of a healthy diet. It not only promotes proper digestion and elimination but also feeds the beneficial bacteria in your gut.

(Source: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/food-as-medicine#nourishment>)

**HEART-HEALTHY FOODS:** "You can reduce your risk of developing cardiovascular disease by eating certain foods every day," says preventive cardiology dietitian Julia Zumpano, RD, LD. "There is a great variety of fruits and vegetables that are good for your heart." She recommends eating foods that are in their natural form, coming from the ground, as in a whole-foods diet. That includes foods such as nuts, fish, whole grains, olive oil, vegetables and fruits. Zumpano says don't be afraid to treat yourself occasionally to a glass of red wine or a piece of dark chocolate. She suggests using this list as a guide to create meals and snacks with a healthy focus which could make a big difference in cardiovascular health. Some foods to consider are salmon, tuna, herring or trout; nuts such as almonds or walnuts; blueberries, strawberries and blackberries are full of phytonutrients and soluble fiber. Flaxseed and chia seeds provide omega 3, fiber and protein. Oats can top off yogurt or salads. Beans like garbanzo, pinto, kidney or black beans, are high in fiber, B-vitamins and minerals. Veggies bright in color like carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers and tomatoes are packed with carotenoids and vitamins. Fruits such as oranges, cantaloupes and papaya are rich in beta-carotene, potassium, magnesium and fiber.

(Source: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/12-heart-healthy-foods-to-work-into-your-diet/>)

**FOOD AS MEDICINE'S NEXT BIG THING:** Joanna Hunter, RDN, owner of Vita Nutrition Services in New Jersey believes nutrigenomics, "you are what you eat", is the next big thing. We're in exciting times in terms of technological and healthcare advancements and as scientists and researchers learn more about genetic make-up and how food effects our DNA, advancements have been made in the relatively new field of nutrigenomics. Researchers believe there is a possibility we will be able to "eat for our genes". Breakthroughs in this field would allow dietitians to cater their meal plans to specific individual genetic expressions. This could possibly impact not only the everyday health of an individual, but also help ward off disease linked to family history like certain cancers, diabetes and obesity. Instead of healthcare professionals giving more recommendations like eat more vegetables, they would be able to say exactly what types of foods each person would need to eat to thrive.

(Source: <https://www.thediabetescouncil.com/nutritional-breakthroughs/>)

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