Ten Best and Worst Foods for Health and Longevity

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I am often asked for my list of the best foods to eat — the foods that contain the most micronutrients, phytochemicals and other health-promoting compounds. People want to know which high-nutrient foods provide the keys to optimum health and longevity. They are searching for a simple answer to the question, "What should I eat to reach my ideal weight, achieve immunity to disease and feel my best every day?"

It is difficult to squeeze all the nutrient dense, health promoting foods into a list of the ten best. The foods on my list however, are the foods that I believe everyone should include in their diet on a regular basis. They are strongly cancer-protective and longevity-favorable. They contain the most vitamins and minerals and powerful phytochemicals including allium compounds, glucosinolates, aromatase inhibitors, flavonoids and lignans. Of course not all of my favorites could make my top ten and the runners-up include many other vegetables and fruits.

Ten Best Foods

- Green Leafy Vegetables (e.g. kale, collard greens, mustard greens, spinach, lettuce)
- Non Leafy Cruciferous Vegetables (e.g. broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage)
- Berries
- Beans
- Mushrooms
- Onions
- Seeds (e.g. flax, chia, hemp, sesame, sunflower, pumpkin)
- Nuts (e.g. walnuts, pistachios, pine nuts, almonds, cashews)
- Tomatoes
- Pomegranates

It is almost just as challenging to take all the bad foods in the world and condense them down to the worst of the worst. Foods have the power to heal but also have the power to harm. Our leading causes of death, including cancer, diabetes, and heart disease are primarily the result of the foods we eat. The wrong foods can be as addictive as drugs and alcohol and can cause us to lead lives that provide only a fraction of our potential for health, energy level and physiological well-being.

Foods such as dairy and other animal products are rich in substances that scientific investigations have shown to be associated with cancer and heart disease incidence: animal protein, saturated fat, cholesterol and arachidonic acid.[1] The high animal protein content of dairy increases levels of IGF-1 in the blood, which increases cancer risk. The combination of dairy with insulin-raising sugars is even more dangerous when it comes to cancer risk.[2] Processed foods containing refined white sugar, refined white flour, salt and oil comprise over 60 percent of the calories in the American diet[3] but provide little if any of the antioxidant nutrients or phytochemicals that are essential for preventing chronic disease and premature death. Salt consumption has been linked to both stomach cancer and hypertension.[4] Needless to say, I advise people to avoid the foods on my "worst" list entirely.

Ten Worst Foods

- Sweetened Dairy Products (e.g. ice cream, low-fat ice cream, frozen yogurt)
- Trans Fat Containing Foods (e.g. stick margarine, shortening, fast foods, commercial baked goods)
- Donuts
- Sausage, Hot Dogs, and Luncheon Meats
- Smoked Meat, Barbecued Meat and Conventionally-Raised Red Meat
- Fried Foods including Potato Chips and French Fries
- <u>Highly-salted Foods</u>
- Soda
- Refined White Sugar
- <u>Refined White Flour</u>

It is clear that unrefined plant foods should make up the bulk of your diet and that fruits and vegetables score highest on the nutrient density scale in terms of concentration of nutrients per calorie. It is also obvious to anyone who has studied the research and looked at the trends in recent years, that a diet based on refined processed foods and animal products cannot sustain optimum health and protection against disease.

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