

Nutrition Zone:



**BIG
HERO
SNACKS**





What's all this fuss about superfoods? *By Elizabeth Montgomery*

Superfoods have become a popular buzzword in the world of health and fitness. These are the foods that are prized for having the ability to revitalise the body with a potent array of vital nutrients. Many are promoted in the mainstream media as having the miraculous ability to eliminate multiple health symptoms, boost energy, or even reverse ageing – with some even taking the place of supplementation.

But are they really worth all the hype? There are scores of vegetables and fruits that have been awarded the superfood title, for example: blueberries, grapes, broccoli and tomatoes. And many more come with exotic names from far away lands such as lucuma, acai, baobab and moringa.

While there are many foods that are given the status of superfood, there are, in fact, very few that can offer an exceptional range and level of nutrients that lead on to greatly enhanced health.

So what is a superfood?

Superfoods are considered to be foods that are exceptionally nutrient dense and therefore especially beneficial for health and wellbeing. Basically, a superfood's nutrient composition is notably higher than what is readily found in a single food, or even an entire meal. When ingested on a regular basis, a superfood can significantly give the body increased levels of a wide spectrum of nutrients.

Key superfood nutrients:

ENZYMES: required for all metabolic functions, like digestion

ANTIOXIDANTS: protect against cellular damage from free radicals, anti-ageing

PHYTOCHEMICALS: known for disease fighting properties, hormonal balancing

VITAMINS: the fundamentals of good health, both fat and water soluble

MINERALS: required for multiple functions including energy production, bone and nerve health

ESSENTIAL FATS: important for cellular, endocrine and skin health

AMINO ACIDS: building blocks of protein, vital for skin and muscles

Can superfoods really enhance health?

It is of increasing concern among health professionals that it's no longer possible to obtain all of the required nutrients for health through diet alone. This is due to the fact that most of the soil used to grow crops has become depleted due to industrialised farming practices. Research has shown that commercially grown fruits and vegetables are lacking many of the vital nutrients required for health – even when organically grown. Therefore, superfoods can play a powerful role in helping to bridge the nutritional gap currently found in our food supply.

But before rushing out to purchase the myriad 'superfoods' on offer, it's important to understand that many do not contain the full nutrient spectrum required to be deemed worthy of such status. Take blueberries for example. While they are known for their high antioxidant content and health promoting properties, they are also deficient in a wide spectrum of vitamins and minerals.

Studies carried out by the Institute of Medicine and the Food and Agriculture Organization in the US found that they were lacking in significant amounts of vital nutrients (potassium, protein, zinc, folate, vitamin E) for them to be considered a true superfood. In fact, for blueberries to make the grade, a tremendous amount would have to be eaten in one sitting – up to 25 bowlfuls.

Remember, a true superfood is one that is ultra nutrient dense. Given the times in which we are living, it may well be necessary – even crucial for health – to begin to incorporate these into our diets on a more regular basis. This, in turn, might even reduce the amount of supplementation currently required for health maintenance. As long as we carefully select, and regularly consume what are indeed true superfoods, glowing health may well be within reach. ॐ

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MEET THE ALL STARS

SPROUTS: sprouts are one of the most nutritious foods on earth and contain potent medicinal properties. These are literally a powerhouse of nutrients and contain between 20 to 30 times the nutritional value than the full grown plant. They are rich in vitamins, minerals, enzymes and amino acids. Different types have different health properties. For example, broccoli sprouts contain high levels of sulforaphane which is prized for its anti inflammatory and anti cancer benefits and sunflower seed sprouts are extremely rich in protein, essential fats and chlorophyll, required for cellular health and healthy red blood cells.

SEAWEED: seaweeds are packed with essential nutrients and are exceptionally rich in minerals. Iodine rich, they are valued for their ability to nourish the thyroid gland. They also help protect and detoxify the body from exposure to radiation and heavy metals.

ALGAE: algae is the oldest plant form on earth and has remarkable health properties. It's able to repair the DNA and RNA within the cells and helps to remove harmful heavy metals and carcinogenic compounds from the body. Protein rich green chlorella is fast becoming a popular health food favourite and is the richest source of chlorophyll in the world.

