

# 12 Fantastically Healthy Foods for Diabetes

## Diabetes Power Foods (from Prevention Magazine Online)

### 1. Beans

Beans have more to boast about than being high in fiber (plant compounds that help you feel full, steady blood sugar, and even lower cholesterol; a half cup of black beans delivers more than 7 grams). They're a not-too-shabby source of calcium, a mineral that research shows can help burn body fat. In ½ cup of white beans, you'll get almost 100 mg of calcium—about 10% of your daily intake. Beans also make an excellent protein source; unlike other proteins Americans commonly eat (such as red meat), beans are low in saturated fat—the kind that gunks up arteries and can lead to heart disease.

**How to eat them:** Add them to salads, soups, chili, and more. There are so many different kinds of beans, you could conceivably have them every day for a week and not eat the same kind twice.

### 2. Dairy

You're not going to find a better source of calcium and vitamin D—a potent diabetes-quelling combination—than in dairy foods like milk, cottage cheese, and yogurt. One study found that women who consumed more than 1,200 mg of calcium and more than 800 IU of vitamin D a day were 33% less likely to develop diabetes than those taking in less of both nutrients.

You can get these nutrients from other foods, but none combine them like dairy does. Stick to fat-free or low-fat versions of your favorite dairy foods—"regular" has a lot of saturated fat.

**How to eat it:** Drink milk with some meals instead of soda or sugary juices, have yogurt or cottage cheese as a snack or dessert, and use milk to make oatmeal or thicken certain soups.

### 3. Salmon

Nutritionists can't recommend this seriously healthy fish enough. It's a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids (3 ounces provides as much as 1,800 mg), healthy fats that reduce the risk of heart disease, whittle your waistline, reduce inflammation, and improve insulin resistance. Salmon is also one of the best nondairy sources of vitamin D around.

**How to get it:** Sauté a salmon fillet for dinner instead of chicken or meat once or twice a week (it's easy to season and toss in the oven), or add canned salmon to salads or omelets.

## 4. Tuna

Another amazingly healthy fish, a 3-ounce piece of tuna contains 1,300 mg of omega-3s and a respectable amount of vitamin D to boot. But tuna can be high in mercury, a compound that may cause neurological problems in huge doses. To be safe, buy canned light tuna instead of albacore and limit your tuna intake to 12 ounces a week.

**How to eat it:** Make tuna salad sandwiches, pile on whole wheat crackers as a snack, or throw steaks on the grill instead of burgers.

## 5. Barley

One of the healthiest grains you're probably not eating, barley is rich in a specific kind of soluble fiber called beta-glucan. Research shows beta-glucan can lower total and LDL cholesterol by preventing your body's ability to absorb it; one review found that consuming just 3 grams a day—about the amount in a single barley serving—can lower cholesterol by 8%.

Thanks to its fiber abundance, barley can also help steady your blood sugar while filling you up—a weight loss bonus. The grain even boasts a modest amount of calcium.

**How to eat it:** Look for hulled barley, which isn't as refined as the pearl barley that supermarkets typically carry (you may need to visit a health food store). Soak it overnight before cooking, then add to soups, stews, or rice pilaf.

## 6. Oats

Like barley and beans, oats are a diabetes power food because of their fiber content—a half cup of instant oats provides 4 g. Research shows that oat lovers can also lower total and “bad” LDL cholesterol and improve insulin resistance. All the soluble fiber oats contain slows the rate at which your body can break down and absorb carbohydrates, which means your blood sugar levels stay stable.

**How to eat them:** The easiest way is straight from your cereal bowl, but you can also sneak oats into all kinds of recipes, from pancakes to meat loaf to cookies.

## 7. Berries

Berries are nature's candy—but unlike sugary confections from the checkout aisle, they're loaded with fiber and antioxidants called polyphenols. A cup of blackberries supplies 7.6 g of fiber; blueberries contain 3.5 g. Berries' antioxidants are also good for your ticker: One 2008 study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that people with heart disease risk factors who ate berries for 8 weeks had a drop in blood pressure and a boost in “good” HDL cholesterol.

**How to eat them:** Wonderful alone, berries are also tasty when stirred into oatmeal, ice cream, or even salads. Fresh berries freeze well, so if you're not going to eat them right away, store them in your freezer so you always have some on hand.

## 8. Dates

These chewy fruits aren't much to look at—plain and brown and a little sticky. But pop one in your mouth and you'll be rewarded with a sweet taste and delightful texture. Their palate-pleasing nature, combined with a generous supply of fiber (7 dates supply 4 g), makes them a perfect diabetes-friendly snack. They're also jam-packed with antioxidants—with more per serving than grapes, oranges, broccoli, and peppers, according to one study.

**How to eat them:** Stuff dates with pecan or walnut halves for a satisfying snack, or toss them into breads and cookies.

## 9. Greens

You're probably thinking of lettuce, but this category of veggie—a staple of Southern cooking—is incredibly diverse, with choices such as turnip, mustard, and beet greens, as well as chard. All are outstanding sources of fiber (1 cooked cup of any of the aforementioned supplies between 3 and 6 g) and calcium (100 to 250 mg per cup).

Greens may also be good for your heart, thanks to the folate they contain. This B vitamin appears to lower levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that in high amounts can raise heart disease risk. Research shows getting 400 mcg of folate a day can lower homocysteine by 25% (a cup of cooked turnip greens contains 170 mcg).

**How to eat them:** Unless you've grown up with greens, you may consider them an acquired taste, but prepared just right, they're delicious! Use them in entrées, sandwiches, and salads. Or simply toss mustard, collard, or beet greens with artichoke hearts and sauté in olive oil.

## 10. Lentils

Like their bean cousins, lentils are loaded with fiber—1 cup cooked contains a whopping 16 g. That same cup also delivers close to 360 mcg of folate, just shy of the 400 that adults need each day. If you're not a meat person, lentils are a good alternative source of protein; they also contain a variety of vitamins and minerals.

**How to eat them:** Add to soups and pastas for extra texture, or enjoy as a side dish in lieu of beans. Feeling more adventurous? Try a spicy Indian dish that uses lentils as a staple ingredient, like *tadka dal*, made with green chiles and garlic.

## 11. Flaxseed

They may be tiny, but the seeds of the flax plant pack a big health punch. Flaxseed is best known as a source of fiber and alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which your body converts to omega-3s EPA and DHA. In several large studies, researchers have found a link between increased ALA intake and lower odds of heart disease, heart attack, and other

**cardiovascular issues. These magic seeds also show promise for lowering cholesterol and blood sugar.**

**How to eat them: Add ground flaxseed to all kinds of food, such as oatmeal, low-fat cottage cheese, and fruit smoothies.**

## **12. Walnuts**

**Just 1 ounce of these healthy nuts (about 14 halves) delivers almost 2 g of fiber plus 2.6 g of ALA, the omega-3 precursor. But you get about 185 calories in that same ounce, so count out a proper portion if you're watching your weight.**

**How to eat them: Aside from a stand-alone snack, chopped walnuts make a great topping for salad and add a bit of crunch to cookies and brownies.**

Source: Prevention Magazine online