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FREE

VALENTINE'S DAY
**CUPID SHOULD BE IN
SEASON YEAR ROUND**

page 10



CONCERTS
REMEMBERED

**BEACH
BOYS
50TH**

page 11

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

FEEL LIKE SNACKING?

Seven Super Foods that do a body good

by Kathy N. Johnson, PhD

When it comes to healthy snacks, the age of the celery and peanut butter is over. Sure, both are good for you, but so are plenty of other delicious foods packed with even more nutrients and value. Due to their health-boosting properties, these delicious snacks have been re-branded as "super foods" – incorporate each item into your daily diet and you will quickly understand why the word "super" prefaces each of these snacks. Whether you are craving something sweet, something salty, something crunchy, or something creamy, there is a super foods snack for you. Take note of the serving sizes mentioned and enjoy all snacks in moderation for a healthy, varied diet.

1. Almonds have been shown to lower cholesterol and help maintain a healthy weight. About a ¼ cup of almonds is a beneficial serving.

Enjoy them plain or roasted, whole or slivered. Almond butter – just a tablespoon or two – is a healthy treat, too. Try some on a whole grain cracker and a cup of green tea for a late afternoon energy boost.

2. Blueberries are as full of cancer- and disease-fighting antioxidants as any food around, so much so that they have been even shown to restore antioxidant levels. Also, like cranberries, they can help prevent urinary tract infections. Note that wild blueberries tend to have even more antioxidants than cultivated ones. Fresh berries are delicious all on their own or with a bit of Greek yogurt (see #5). Frozen berries can be used in smoothies or put on top of low-fat frozen yogurt. Use about ½ cup fresh or frozen berries as a serving.

3. Broccoli eaten either raw or lightly steamed contains tons of soluble fiber and antioxidants, as well as folic acid, calcium, iron, and potassium. Broccoli has even been shown to have the power to reduce diabetic damage. Don't throw away the stalk/stem! Cut off the thick, fibrous darker green peel to reveal the tender, pale green vegetable underneath – it has the crunch of celery and a mild broccoli flavor. Try broccoli florets or peeled stems with a little drizzle of soy sauce or a simple dip made from fat-free Greek yogurt (again see #5) – stir in minced garlic and herbs, lemon zest and minced rosemary, or a sprinkle of cumin and cayenne to taste. About ½ cup of florets or peeled stem is a serving.

4. Cherries, tart ones in particular, have similarly insanely high antioxidant levels as blueberries, putting them in the position to fight memory loss, heart disease, and diabetes. They've also been shown to help reduce inflammation, helping alleviate arthritic and gout pain. Fresh, frozen, or dried (un-

sweetened) tart cherries make a great snack on their own or combined with other nuts (almonds, walnuts, pumpkins seeds) and fruits (blueberries, raisins). Count ½ cup fresh cherries or ¼ cup dried cherries as a serving.

5. Greek yogurt is thick and creamy in a way regular yogurt can only dream of. It's high in calcium, of course, and contains good levels of probiotics,

7. Carrots – a carrot a day for Vitamin A! Many complementary studies have shown that individuals who consume higher levels of Vitamin A and other antioxidants over several years have substantially decreased levels of Alzheimer's disease. However, don't overdo on carrot consumption because more than three a day will saturate the body's ability to store



which aid healthy digestion. But did you know low-fat and fat-free versions contain twice as much protein as regular yogurt? The texture of Greek yogurt makes it a great snack – especially when topped with dried fruits like blueberries, tart cherries, or raisins – as well as a good substitute for fatty sour cream. Include in it your three servings (1/2 cup each) of low-fat dairy a day.

6. Dark chocolate – saving the best for last. Dark chocolate has tons of antioxidants, magnesium, manganese, copper, zinc, and phosphorous. Look for chocolate that contains over 70% cocoa to get the full benefit of chocolate's antioxidant powers and limit your intake to about an ounce a day.

vitamin A over a short time and can show up as an orange tint on the skin.

With so much of our lives surrounding and depending on food, you owe it to yourself to get the food you need to do more than survive – but to enjoy living. So find a way to blend and bake the above foods into your daily diet and I bet you will start feeling "super" in no time.

Kathy N. Johnson, PhD, CMC, is a Certified Geriatric Care Manager. Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Home Care Assistance. Kathy co-authored the book, Happy to 102: The Best Kept Secrets to a Long and Happy Life, based on the ground breaking Okinawa Centenarian Study.