

By Dr. Mercola

If optimal health is your goal, there's no getting around your diet. Your physical health is a direct reflection of what you put into your body, and how you live your life in general. Pre-packaged processed foods may be convenient, but cooking from scratch using fresh unprocessed ingredients is an absolute must if you want to improve your health.

The term "superfood" has become something of a marketing buzzword in recent years, and many processed food products will boast such ingredients. But don't be fooled. Processing tends to denature nutrients, so what you end up with is typically a far inferior version compared to the real thing.

Your best bet is to simply stick with the originals, meaning *whole organic foods*.

Below is a list of my top 10 best superfoods—whole foods that offer a wide range of essential nutrients that can easily be integrated into a balanced diet. Aim to incorporate as many of these foods into your diet on a daily or weekly basis, and you'll be off to a great start. Keep in mind that all of the foods on this list should be *organic or wild*.

1 Organic Pastured Eggs, Preferably Raw

[Free-range or "pastured" eggs](#) are a relatively inexpensive and amazing source of high-quality nutrients that many people are deficient in, especially high-quality protein and fat. A single egg contains:

- Nine essential amino acids
- One of the highest quality proteins you can find. Proteins are nutrients that are essential to the building, maintenance and repair of your body tissues such as your skin, internal organs and muscles. They are also the major components of your immune system and hormones
- Lutein and zeaxanthin (for your eyes)
- Choline for your brain, nervous- and cardiovascular systems
- Naturally occurring [B12](#)

Ideally, you'll want to eat your eggs raw, or as close to raw as possible, such as soft-boiled or poached. I currently have four raw egg yolks nearly every morning over a bed of dehydrated vegetable pulp left over from my juicing, along with some red onions and a whole avocado. I discard the egg whites as I struggle with kidney damage; a result of having my mercury filling removed improperly, so I must limit my protein intake and in my view, the egg yolks are exponentially superior to the whites. If you chose to use egg whites, please don't eat them raw unless you also consume the egg yolks, otherwise you risk developing a biotin deficiency.

As long as you have a good source for fresh organic eggs, you need not worry about [salmonella](#) if you choose to eat them raw. About 10 years ago I did [an analysis](#) using US government data that showed you would have to eat about 30,000 eggs before you encountered one egg with

salmonella, and this was with conventional eggs. Pastured chickens are much healthier than factory farmed chickens and have a far lower risk of these types of infections.

To find free-range pasture farms, try your local health food store, or go to <http://www.eatwild.com> or <http://www.localharvest.org>.

2 Kale

Kale is an inexpensive cruciferous vegetable that can help ease lung congestion, and is beneficial to your stomach, liver, and immune system. It's an excellent source of multiple vitamins and other nutrients, including:

Vitamin A	Vitamin B	Vitamin C
Calcium	Lutein (helps protect against macular degeneration)	Zeaxanthin (helps protect against macular degeneration)
Indole-3-carbinol (may protect against colon cancer)	Iron	Chlorophyll

3 Raw Grass-Fed Organic Kefir or Yoghurt

Adding kefir or yoghurt made from grass-fed raw milk is an excellent way to boost your immunity and increase your daily energy. Kefir is a traditionally fermented food that is chockfull of helpful bacteria (probiotics). In ancient times, food preservation was accomplished through lacto-fermentation, a process that adds a host of beneficial micro-organisms to food. This makes them easier to digest, and increases the healthy flora in your intestinal tract.

The bacteria that make the kefir or yogurt consume most of the lactose in milk, which can be a problem for someone with insulin resistance.

The importance of maintaining healthy balanced gut flora simply cannot be overstated. Far from simply helping your body to better digest and assimilate your food (which they do very well), probiotics influence the activity of hundreds of your genes, helping them to express in a positive, disease-fighting manner. Friendly bacteria also train your immune system to distinguish between pathogens and non-harmful antigens, and to respond appropriately. This important function prevents your immune system from overreacting to non-harmful antigens, which is the genesis of allergies.

Probiotics can even help to [normalize your weight](#), and lack of beneficial bacteria in your gut may play a significant role in the development of [type 2 diabetes](#), [depression and other mood disorders](#), and may even contribute to [autism and vaccine-induced damage](#).

Please beware that pasteurized products will NOT provide you with these health benefits, as the pasteurization process destroys most of the precious enzymes and other nutrients. In addition to beneficial probiotics, traditionally fermented kefir also contains:

Beneficial yeast	Minerals, such as magnesium	Essential amino acids (such as tryptophan, which is well-known for its relaxing effect on the nervous system)	Complete proteins
Calcium	Vitamins B1, B2, and biotin (B7)	Vitamin K	Phosphorus

Maintaining adequate vitamin B intake is important to maintain optimal function of your kidneys, liver and nervous system, which in turn helps promote healthy looking skin, boosting energy and promoting longevity. Kefir's ample supply of phosphorus -- the second most abundant mineral in your body -- helps utilize carbohydrates, fats, and proteins for cell growth, maintenance and energy.

A great way to obtain kefir is to make it yourself. It's easy to do using a [starter culture](#) and raw grass-fed milk. While raw grass-fed organic yoghurt has many similar immune-boosting benefits, kefir contains several major strains of friendly bacteria not commonly found in yogurt:

- Lactobacillus Caucasus
- Leuconostoc
- Acetobacter species, and
- Streptococcus species

4 Raw Organic Almonds

Just be sure you avoid making the mistake of consuming nuts that are heated commercially as the fats they contain are perishable and will be damaged when they go through this type of processing. A new 21st century concern is pasteurization. For the last four years, nearly all commercial vendors of almonds are required to pasteurize them before sale.

Back in September 2007, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a [requirement that virtually all almonds had to be "pasteurized"](#) after a couple of salmonella outbreaks in 2001 and 2004 were traced back to raw almonds. However, raw almond growers fought back, and in August 2010, the [U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit overturned a lower court decision](#) that prevented California almond farmers from challenging the USDA regulation. John Vetne, the attorney representing the almond farmers, [has stated](#):

"We are pleased that the Appeals Court rejected USDA's argument that courthouse doors are closed to farmers. We now intend to demonstrate to the federal district court that USDA acted outside of authority granted by Congress when it denied California almond growers a consumer market for raw almonds."

This is indeed a great turn of events, as almonds are an excellent healthy whole food source as long as they're RAW. [Raw nuts](#) contain mostly polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, which are good fats that promote healthy cholesterol levels. And they have zero trans fats, as long as they're processed properly (such as dehydration, NOT pasteurization).

Almonds in particular are rich in phytochemicals; plant components that promote heart and vascular health. They're a great source of:

Vitamin E	Magnesium	Protein	Fiber
Potassium	Calcium	Phosphorus	Iron

Pasteurized almonds, however, are neither "raw" nor healthy. Even the use of the term "pasteurized" is used in a misleading way, because according to the Almond Board of California (ABC), no heating is used during the pasteurization process, but rather a process referred to by the FDA as "terminal gas sterilization" using propylene oxide—a highly toxic flammable [chemical compound](#), once used as a racing fuel before it became prohibited for safety reasons. It's [an epoxide](#), which is not GRAS (generally recognized as safe for human ingestion). So, make sure your almonds are *truly raw*, and have not been sterilized/pasteurized, even if you have to call the company to verify.

Fortunately there are exemptions for small sellers and it is possible to find truly raw unpasteurized almonds if you search hard enough. I personally eat about two pounds a week.

5 Wild Alaskan Salmon

I have vigilantly warned against eating fish, as [virtually all fish these days contains dangerously high levels of mercury](#) and other toxic contaminants. If it wasn't for the health risks posed by this contamination, fish in general would be among my absolute most recommended foods for their outstanding nutritional benefits, including high levels of omega-3 with DHA and EPA, which most people are desperately lacking in their diets.

However, there are still some exceptions, and wild Alaskan salmon is one of them, *as long as its purity can be verified*. This was so important to me personally; I did loads of research to find a [trusted source that passed third-party testing](#) by an independent lab.

I typically have pure wild Alaskan salmon one or two times a week as it is an excellent source of:

- Essential animal-based omega-3 fats (EPA and DHA)
- Astaxanthin and other antioxidants
- High-quality protein

6 Avocado

Avocados are an excellent source of healthful raw fat, which most Americans are seriously deficient in. They also provide close to 20 essential health-boosting nutrients, including:

- Fiber
- Potassium (more than twice the amount found in a banana)
- Vitamin E
- B-vitamins
- Folic acid

In addition, avocados enable your body to more efficiently absorb fat-soluble nutrients, such as alpha- and beta-carotene and lutein, in other foods eaten in conjunction. I eat a whole avocado for breakfast every morning to increase my calorie intake without increasing my grain carbohydrates.

7 Organic Coconut Oil

Half of the fat content in coconut oil is lauric acid—a fat rarely found in nature—that could easily qualify as a "miracle" ingredient because of its unique health promoting properties. Your body converts lauric acid into monolaurin, which has anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-protozoa properties.

Additionally, the naturally occurring saturated fat found in coconut oil also has some amazing health benefits, such as:

<u>Promoting heart health</u>	<u>Supporting immune system health</u>	Providing you with an <u>immediate energy source</u>
<u>Promoting weight loss</u>	<u>Supporting a healthy metabolism</u>	<u>Supporting the proper functioning of your thyroid gland</u>

Your body sends medium-chain fatty acids directly to your liver to use as energy. This makes coconut oil a powerful source of instant energy to your body, a function usually served in the diet by simple carbohydrates. Additionally, research has demonstrated that, due to its metabolic

effect, coconut oil also increases the activity of your thyroid. And you've probably heard that a sluggish thyroid is one reason why some people are unable to lose weight, no matter what they do...

Perhaps one of the most interesting benefits of coconut oil is its potential to ward off, or perhaps even treat, dementia. According to [research by Dr. Mary Newport](#), ketone bodies—an alternative fuel for your brain which your body makes when digesting coconut oil—may offer *profound* benefits in the fight against Alzheimer's disease.

Furthermore, Dr. Newport believes the [benefits of ketone bodies](#) may also extend to a number of other health conditions, including:

Parkinson's disease	Huntington's disease	Multiple sclerosis	Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease)
Drug resistant epilepsy	Brittle type I diabetes	Insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes	Improved recovery after heart attack

Coconut oil is the ideal choice for all types of cooking. In fact, it's the only oil stable enough to resist mild heat-induced damage. So, whenever you need an oil to cook or bake with, use coconut oil instead of butter, olive oil, vegetable oil, margarine, or any other type of oil called for in recipes. Even though I don't fully recommend frying foods, if you must fry, by all means use coconut oil -- it's your smartest choice. I typically have one to two tablespoons of coconut oil several times a week.

8 Whey Protein Concentrate

Whey protein, a by-product of milk and cheese, was promoted for its health benefits as early as 420 B.C. These days, evidence continues to mount in favor of whey, which is often referred to as the gold standard of protein.

Whey protein has been linked to a variety of health benefits, including:

Helping your insulin work more effectively, which helps maintain your blood sugar level after a meal -- This is important as research suggests lowering your blood sugar levels after meals may be more beneficial for your health than lowering fasting blood sugars.	Promoting healthy insulin secretion, which is imperative for optimal health. This is one of the foremost reasons for avoiding sugars and grains, as overconsumption of grains and sugary foods has a negative impact on both, and is a prime factor in developing type 2 diabetes.
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Helping to promote your optimal intake of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals needed for your overall wellness.	Helping you preserve lean body tissue (particularly during exercise) as it delivers bioavailable amino acids and cysteine.
Supporting your immune system, as it contains immunoglobulins.	Maintaining blood pressure levels that are already within the normal range.

As you age, your body gradually loses its ability to produce critical amino acids -- the essential proteins you need for energy production, immune actions and protein buildup in your muscle. Therefore, the need to supplement with these amino acids increases with age, and increases even more in times of high physical stress, like after a workout, or when recovering from injury or illness.

Whey protein concentrate (not to be confused with the [far inferior whey protein isolate](#)) is an ideal choice as it's a rich source of amino acids.

It's also the best food for [maximizing your glutathione levels](#) as it provides all the raw materials for glutathione production (cysteine, glycine and glutamate). Glutathione is your body's most powerful antioxidant and has even been called "the master antioxidant." It is a tripeptide found inside every single cell in your body.

When shopping for a whey protein, focus on quality! A high-quality whey protein must be:

- Cold pressed
- Derived from grass-fed cows
- Free of hormones
- Chemical-free
- Free of artificial sweeteners and sugar

Beware that many commercially-available whey protein powders are significantly damaged and nutritionally deficient due to over-processing. Some popular brands of protein powder may even contain dangerous levels of heavy metals. A [2010 Consumer Reports' test](#) showed that three of the 15 protein drinks tested contained risky levels of arsenic, cadmium, and lead, so do your homework!

9 Raw Organic Grass-Fed Butter

[Butter made from raw organic grass-fed milk](#) can be a very healthy part of your diet. (For sources of raw butter, visit www.realmilk.com.) I typically have anywhere between a half a pound, to a pound of raw organic grass-fed butter per week.

It's an excellent source of high-quality nutrients, including:

<p>Vitamins, such as vitamin A, needed for a wide range of functions, from maintaining good vision to keeping the endocrine system in top shape, and all the other fat-soluble vitamins (D, E and K2), which are often lacking in the modern industrial diet.</p>	<p>Trace minerals, including manganese, chromium, zinc, copper and selenium (a powerful antioxidant). Butter provides more selenium per gram than wheat germ or herring. It's also an excellent source of iodine.</p>
<p>Healthful fats, including short- and medium-chain fats, which support immune function, boost metabolism and have anti-microbial properties, as well as the perfect balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fats, and arachidonic acid, which is important for brain function, skin health and prostaglandin balance.</p>	<p>Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA), a compound that gives excellent protection against cancer and also helps your body build muscle rather than store fat.</p>
<p>Glycosphingolipids, a special category of fatty acids that protect against gastrointestinal infections, especially in the very young and the elderly.</p>	<p>Wulzen Factor, a hormone-like substance that prevents arthritis and joint stiffness, ensuring that calcium in your body is put into your bones rather than your joints and other tissues. The Wulzen factor is present only in raw butter and cream; it is destroyed by pasteurization.</p>

10 Green Vegetable Juice

Juicing your vegetables is a great way to make sure you're getting sufficient amounts of veggies in your diet. Raw vegetable juice teems with valuable and sensitive micronutrients that become damaged or destroyed when the juice is pasteurized, so avoid the store-bought versions and juice your own instead. Raw juice can be likened to a "living broth." It is almost like receiving an intravenous infusion of vitamins, minerals, and enzymes that go straight into your system without having to be broken down.

I have a quart of vegetable juice every day unless I am travelling because it helps me radically increase my vegetable intake. The benefits of raw organic vegetable juice are numerous. For example, it can help:

- [Promote weight loss](#)
- **Boost your immune system** by supercharging it with concentrated phytochemicals. Raw juice also contains [biophotonic light energy](#), which can help revitalize your body.
- **Increase energy.** When your body has an abundance of the nutrients it needs, and your pH is optimally balanced, you feel energized. Since it can be utilized by your body immediately, those who juice report feeling the "kick" of energy almost instantly.

- **Support brain health.** People who drank juices (fruit and vegetable) more than three times per week, compared to less than once a week, were 76 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, according to the [Kame Project](#).

I have previously written an [extensive guide to juicing](#), which I highly recommend reading to help you get started. One important factor to keep in mind is that, since vegetable juice is very perishable, it's best to drink all of your juice right after you make it. However, if you're careful, you can store it for up to 24 hours with only moderate nutritional decline.