10 Foods That Are Healthier Than You Think

These 10 foods might surprise you with their stealthy health benefits, from avocados to spaghetti and meatballs.

**Avocado**
So it may seem weird for a fruit (yes, avocados are fruits) to contain fat, but avocados are one of the few produce items that do. Their heart-protecting monounsaturated fats are actually one of the things that make them so healthy. Eating these green guys can help lower your risk of heart-disease and stroke—so go ahead and have some of that guacamole.

**Spaghetti and meatballs**
Thanks to the iron and protein from the beef Lycopene from tomato sauce and energy—producing carbs from the pasta this dish is a healthy trifecta. If you stick to modest portions and lean beef, you can enjoy its benefits without overdoing it. Limit yourself to three ounces of meat and a cup of cooked pasta per serving. Pump up the health benefits by using whole-wheat pasta, add mushrooms to the meatballs to add fiber and cut out fat.

**Bananas**
Often bashed for their high sugar and carb content, bananas are a ridiculously healthy fruit that everyone can enjoy. A small banana has same calories, carbs and fiber as an apple. They also come packed with vitamins C and B6 and good-for-your-heart potassium. Try slicing and baking them for a sweet snack.

**Peanut Butter**
Peanut butter may indeed contain fat, but 30 percent of your daily calories should come from healthy fats, for which peanut butter is a great choice. The nutty spread is also a good way to get protein, fiber and vitamin E. The same goes for whole peanuts or nuts such as almonds and walnuts—they’re great way to get your daily dose of healthy fats.

**Coffee**
Along with adding a little pep to your step, coffee is teeming with antioxidants. Research has linked drinking the brewed beverage to decreased risk of type 2 diabetes and improved mental health as you age.

**Eggs**
Eggs do contain some cholesterol, but that doesn’t mean they’re a total no-no. According to the American Egg Board, healthy individuals can eat up to two eggs per day without significantly affecting blood cholesterol levels. Eggs are also full of vitamin D and the antioxidant lutein. Don’t skip the yolks there’s just as much protein there as in the whites.
Burritos
Burritos can be a healthy choice: when vegetables, rice, beans and a small portions of meat. Tex Mex treat can cover all your nutrition basis in one tortilla. Opt for 8-inch whole-wheat tortillas and lay off the sour cream and loads of cheese to keep the calories and fat in check.

Corn
Some folks frown on corn because it’s starchy vegetable. Well it is starchy—because it’s actually a grain. One cup of corn kernels has 5 grams of protein, 4 grams of fiber (that’s more than 25 percent of the daily recommendation) and energy-producing B-vitamins. You can also eat corn in a wide variety of ways.

Chicken Thighs
Dark chicken meat has a bad rap for being fatty and artery-clogging, but it’s actually the skin you should be avoiding. Dark meat, like avocados, is high in healthy monounsaturated fats. Thighs are more affordable than skinless chicken breasts, so they’re an all-around smart addition to your weeknight dinner routine.

Potatoes
Yet another veggie shunned for its starch content, potatoes are a nutrition powerhouse. A medium potato has 165 calories, 5 grams of fiber, 4 grams of protein, 10 percent of your daily iron and 70 percent of your daily vitamin C needs.

Source: http://www.foodnetwork.com/healthy/photos/10-foods-that-are-healthier-than-you-think.html

8 Ways Depression Is Dangerous for Your Health

You know that depression is dangerous for your mental health. But did you know it’s also dangerous for your physical health? Untreated or uncontrolled depression can take a big toll on you physically. Depression can make you sick and keep you from taking care of yourself when you are sick. A depression treatment plan can help you avoid these eight health risks linked to depression.

1. Depression and Heart Disease
Studies show that depression can lead to heart disease, make heart disease worse, and make it more difficult to recover from complications of heart disease. Depression can even increase your risk of having a heart attack. Having depression increases your risk of dying by nearly 20 percent in the first six months after a heart attack. Lifestyle habits that often go along with depression—like poor diet, smoking, drinking, and not exercising—are also bad for heart health.

2. Depression and Diabetes
Depression may increase your risk for type 2 diabetes if it causes you to eat poorly, smoke, gain weight, and skip exercising. If you already have diabetes or pre-diabetes, depression can keep you from doing the things necessary to manage your diabetes. No matter which comes first, statistics show that about 20 percent of people with diabetes also have depression. Left untreated, depression and diabetes are a dangerous combination.
3. Depression and Obesity
If you’re depressed, you have a higher risk of being obese. In fact, depression may increase your risk for obesity by 58 percent. If you’re obese, you have a higher risk of being depressed. This is partly because eating is a way to self-medicate when feeling depressed, and not exercising. Depression may also cause you to secrete stress hormones that promote belly fat.

4. Depression and Mental Abuse
Long-standing depression can contribute to loss of brainpower. This is especially true if you are elderly. Brain scans of elderly people with depression show shrinkage in certain areas of the brain that is more significant than among elderly people without depression. Untreated depression early in life increases your risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease, becoming senile, and having a stroke. The more episodes of depression you have over time, the higher your risk.

5. Depression and Substance Abuse
If you have depression and you aren’t getting the right treatment, you may be tempted to treat your symptoms with drugs or alcohol. What’s more, these substances make depression harder to treat. It’s also true that abusing drugs or alcohol can lead to depression. Either way, drugs, alcohol, and depression make a dangerous combination. This is why it’s so important to get help for depression or a substance abuse problem.

6. Depression and Cancer
Up to 25 percent of people with cancer also have depression. Some studies show that depression’s effect on your immune system can make cancer worse. In one study, patients with breast cancer and depression were found to have a higher rate of cancer recurrence and early death. Studies also show that patients with depression and cancer have faster tumor growth. Treatment for depression and participation in support groups can help boost mood and offset emotional distress while undergoing treatment for cancer.

7. Depression and Pain
Chronic pain can lead to depression, and having untreated depression can make pain worse. If you have major depression, you’re three times more likely to experience migraine headaches. Studies show that people with depression are 50 percent more likely to complain of physical symptoms like pain when they visit a doctor. Depression makes pain harder to treat, and pain makes depression worse. The stressful combination of pain and depression can lead to isolation and more depression.
8. Depression and Suicide
The most dangerous risk from untreated depression is suicide; the risk increases when substance abuse is involved. Two-thirds of all suicides are caused by depression. If you ever have thoughts of death or suicide, you need help right away. Warning signs of suicide with depression include giving away favorite possessions, becoming suddenly cheerful, and talking about death as an escape. If suicide seems like a way out, you need to call 911.

Who to talk to About Depression
If you have symptoms of depression that last for more than two weeks, get help. Depression is a treatable disease, but without treatment, it can become a dangerous condition with a number of complications. Start with your primary care doctor. You may be referred to a psychiatrist. Other depression caregivers include psychologists, social workers, therapists, and counselors trained in talk therapy for depression.


New link between coffee beans and human genes

You can blame that third cup of Joe on your genes.
A recent study has found six new genetic variants that could dictate the volume -- and frequency -- of a person's daily coffee consumption.
The research was led by Marilyn Cornelis of the Harvard School of Public Health, and published on Tuesday by the journal Molecular Psychiatry.
Overall, we have known for a long time that there are some genetic components for our coffee-consuming behaviors. Researchers were able to identify six regions in human DNA that were not previously linked to coffee-drinking behavior, which could explain why one drinker will lie awake at night twitching after one cup while another can gulp down the whole pot before their REM cycle.
The study analyzed data from several studies that polled more than 120,000 people on how much coffee they drink a day, then scanned their DNA.
Researchers will be able to use these genetic variants to study the health effects of coffee -- and caffeine -- better.
Most (human) population studies of coffee and heath assume everyone responds to a given amount of coffee in the same way. We know that isn't true and we now have specific genetic variants that we can apply to our studies which will enable us to generate better results.
According to the National Coffee Association’s 2014 drinking trends study, 61% of American adults consume coffee on a daily basis.

Source: [http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/07/living/coffee-consumption-dna-link](http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/07/living/coffee-consumption-dna-link)
Lack of sleep may shrink your brain

Can a lack of sleep affect the size of your brain? It's possible, a recent study published in an online issue of Neurology suggests. European researchers looked at 147 adults between the ages of 20 and 84. With two MRI scans, they examined the link between sleep problems like insomnia and the study participants' brain volume. The first scan was taken before patients completed a questionnaire pertaining to their sleep habits. The second scan was done approximately 3½ years later. The questionnaire showed that 35% of those in the study met the criteria for poor sleep health. Investigators found that those with sleep problems had a more rapid decline in brain volume or size over the course of the study than those who slept well. The results were even more significant in participants over the age of 60. Numerous studies have showed the importance of sleep and the effect sleep deprivation can have on our brains. It is well-known that poor sleep patterns can contribute to such brain disorders as Alzheimer's and dementia.

So it stands to reason that, if a lack of sleep can lead to memory loss, the size of the brain would also be affected.

Poor sleep can affect the immune systems, the cardiovascular health, weight and, of course, memories, but the reason are not identifies.

Studies have shown poor sleep can cause protein buildup in the brain that attacks brain cells. It is not yet known whether poor sleep quality is a cause or consequence of changes in brain structure," said author Claire Sexton of the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

There are effective treatments for sleep problems, so future research needs to test whether improving people's quality of sleep could slow the rate of brain volume loss. If that is the case, improving people's sleep habits could be an important way to improve brain health.

Is it a sleep problem that causes the atrophy (wasting away of a body part), or is it the atrophy that causes the sleep problems? That's a question that needs to be sorted out. Scientists have learned more about the brain in the past 10 years than in all other time periods combined. Take a look at these discoveries to see how to improve your memory and boost your mental power.

Use your vacation day

Brains think more clearly when we're not overworking ourselves. By taking a break from work, you'll experience more "Aha" moments, since you're not using your brain to focus on endless tasks that lie ahead or dwelling on events that occurred in the past. But using your vacation for relaxation and not catching up on work is the key to mentally recharging.

Don’t miss out on sleep

Sleep helps the brain consolidate memories and clear out waste. Lack of sleep can affect your reaction time, your memory and how well you process information. Chronic sleep loss can put you at risk for diabetes, heart disease and stroke and speed up the aging process.
Avoid intense multitasking
It's actually impossible to do several different things at once, and multitasking isn't good for the brain. It decreases mental performance and makes us worse at getting anything done. Focus on one task at a time, and take breaks. If you must take on more than one task, make sure you pair a task that requires less thinking with one that doesn't require as much, such as doing laundry while paying bills.

Get enough Vitamin D
Recently it's been discovered that vitamin D can help support brain health, especially in seniors. People with low vitamin D levels experience more cognitive decline than those with normal levels. The vitamin also supports healthy blood vessel function and the growth and survival of neurons.

Drink Green Tea
Tea has been around for 5,000 years, but new research suggests that drinking green tea can improve attention span and boost your brain for mentally challenging tasks. The caffeine in the beverage can also help with memory recall and processing.

Challenge yourself
Exercising your mind with activities other than traditional "brain games" is a great way to build and maintain brain power. Working on a challenging new skill can give your brain a boost, or even changing your routine to stimulate learning through novelty.

Read more fiction
Fiction novels might improve brain functions in several ways. A small study found that when you are engrossed in a novel, brain connectivity and function are enhanced. The neural changes that occur in the brain when reading put the reader into another person's shoes, and as a result, story comprehension improves.