

# 7 Foods with Healing Power

By Linda York

Spending time on my grandparents' farm taught me the connection between fresh food and good health at an early age. In addition, my grandmother's pantry was our pharmacy and, over the years, many of the things I was taught by Grandma have been backed by "science." Here are seven fresh and natural foods with the potential power to heal you physically and mentally.

## The Magnificent 7



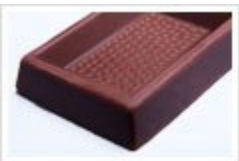
1. Blueberries. These nutrient-packed berries can help bruises disappear. They are a rich source of flavonoids and a good source of vitamin C, which together improve blood circulation (thus reducing swelling) and help form collagen, the tissue that holds skin together.

2. Lemons. Squeeze two whole lemons into your tea, seltzer, and other beverages or on salads and other food to get your daily requirement of vitamin C. This major antioxidant not only fights heart disease and boosts immunity but it also helps form the collagen we need to heal tendons, ligaments, bones, and blood vessels.



3. Garlic. Two garlic cloves a day may keep what Grandpa called "hardening of the arteries" away. We now call it arteriosclerosis, but the garlic works just the same. In a German study recently presented at an American Heart Association conference in Washington, D.C., it was stated that taking two cloves of garlic a day reduces the formation of arterial plaque by up to 40 percent. And 42 other clinical trials have shown that garlic can improve cardiovascular risk factors such as high blood pressure.

4. Lettuce. If getting to sleep is a problem, a sedative you may not have known about is lettuce, which contains a sleep-inducing substance called lectucarium. Its effects have been compared to the sedative effects of opium, but without the accompanying excitement.



5. Chocolate. Dark chocolate is packed with healthy nutrients, including flavonoids, that are part of a group of antioxidants known as polyphenols that decreases LDL (bad) cholesterol oxidation, reduces the risk of blood clots, increases blood flow in arteries, and may lower high blood pressure. In addition, most of us can agree that chocolate improves mood and pleasure. It does that by boosting serotonin and endorphin levels in the brain. Plus, chocolate contains a number of minerals, including calcium, magnesium, and potassium.

6. Apples. Give in to temptation when it comes to one of the earth's healthiest foods. They are a great source of fiber. They're also a source of the phytochemical quercetin—a compound widely recognized for its ability to fight heart disease and cancer. "Apples are one of the best sources of flavonoids—as long as you leave on the peel," Kristine Napier, RD, writes in *Eat to Heal*. "Their complement of phytochemicals helps them fight heart disease, stroke, cancer, infections, inflammation and colitis." Because of the combination of

fiber and fructose, apples help maintain blood sugar levels, which is key in fighting that afternoon blood sugar low. In fact, a successful dieting tip is to crunch into an apple for your afternoon snack—you'll end up eating a lot less during dinner.



Avocados. This tropical fruit wasn't grown in the United States until the 1830s. It is rich in potassium, beta-carotene, and "good" fat—the same monounsaturated fat that's found in olive oil and has been shown to reduce blood cholesterol levels. Avocados are also a rich source of the essential fatty acid (EFA) omega-9 that helps promote hormone regulation, the transportation of fat through the body, and the breakup of cholesterol. Because avocados are higher in calories than other fruits—two-thirds of an avocado has about 150 calories—you might not want to eat the "alligator pear" at every meal, but you can increase the delicious quotient of your favorite sandwich by adding some slices or making it a fiesta by