

Top 10 “Smart Food” Choices for Women

Have you checked your diet this month? Try writing down what you are eating for several days, then double check to see if you are including these foods which are especially important for healthy women. This is one way we “may” give ourselves permission to nurture and nourish ourselves better.

Here are ten “smart foods” wise women include when planning nourishing meals.

1. **Beans** are loaded with soluble and insoluble fiber. They are also packed with protein, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients. Adding more bean dishes to your meal plans is a smart strategy. To reduce the sodium from canned beans, simply strain and rinse them with cool water. Rinsing can eliminate about 40% of the salt. Try hummus/bean spreads, vegetarian baked beans, tossing beans on green salads or add them to pasta and rice dishes if you don't do so already. Bean salads are popular dishes for Spring and Summer events and picnics. Look for a recipe for a tasty Black Bean Salad at www.personalnewtrition.com. Adding more beans to your diet may lower your total cholesterol over time.
2. **Berries** can make dishes more nutritious and sweet. The gem colors in the pigments of blueberries, cherries, cranberries and purple grapes are full of phytonutrients. Blueberries and cranberries contain substances called proanthocyanidins that may help with female urinary tract issues. Scoop some berries on a bowl of cereal, serve them as dessert or blend them in a smoothie. They are full of fiber, vitamins and minerals. Fresh locally grown berries are a real treat. Save seasonal berries in the freezer or try them dried, such as dried cranberries or “craisins”. www.oceanspray.com is a good place to look for recipes...or just toss them into a green salad.
3. **Eggs** are a great source of protein and low in calories. They contain choline which is essential for nearly all women. The American Heart Association is currently saying an egg a day can fit into a healthy diet. Some brands of eggs have additional Vitamin E and/or Omega 3 fatty acids in them. These eggs are an alternative to fish that contain omega 3's. The hens are fed a natural, all vegetarian diet to produce these eggs. A hard boiled egg is both a natural and easy snack.
4. **Flax Seeds** like any seeds are full of fiber. These also contain lignans that act as plant estrogens. One tablespoon of flax seed meal has 30 calories and 2 grams of fiber. It is easy to add a spoonful to oatmeal or to a carton of yogurt. Flax seed meal can be used in recipes to replace cooking butter, oil and margarine. www.bobsreadmill.com has nutrient information, about mostly grains, with plenty of recipes to try. It is best to keep ground flax in an air tight container in the refrigerator or freezer.
5. **Low-Fat Yogurt** is a great source of calcium. Most yogurts contain

300-400 milligrams of calcium per cup with vitamin D to aid absorption. Eating yogurt is an easy way to get a nearly a third of the RDI for women. Low-fat yogurt is also an easy way to incorporate protein and probiotics (good bacteria) into healthy menus. www.dannon.com has healthful recipes for dips, smoothies and other ways to ease more yogurt into meal plans.

6. **Oatmeal** also has fiber which can help us feel fuller longer. The value of adding oats to the diet is that they have been shown to decrease cholesterol absorption and may raise the good cholesterol or HDL. Take some time to get on www.quakeroatmeal.com and get creative with oats. Click on the red bar at the top to access the “healthiest” recipes. This area is designated for health professionals but, is right at your fingertips.
7. **Salmon** is high in omega-3 fatty acids thus is a very heart healthy choice. These fatty acids may decrease the risk of blood clots. The DHA (which is an omega 3 fatty acid found in fish oil) helps with brain development. If you like broiled, baked, grilled or poached salmon, you may want to include it in your meal plan a couple of times a week.
8. **Soy** foods are important sources of protein. Fortified soy milk is the best alternative source of calcium and Vitamin D for women who do not or can not drink cow’s milk. Smoothies made with soy milk, tofu or soy protein powder with berries make a quick breakfast or snack. Green soybeans are called edamame. They have a sweet taste and are another quick soy snack. There are soy patties in many flavors and burger crumbles, as well as varieties of tofu to experiment with. A complete Soy Foods Guide can be found on www.soybean.org If you are looking for a tofu recipe to try, check out www.personalnewtrition.com this month.
9. **Spinach** is a very important food for women of all ages to eat. The folate found in spinach is needed before and during pregnancy. If your blood level of homocysteine (an indicator for heart disease) is elevated make sure you are eating spinach regularly. A delicious Spring Spinach Salad Recipe is on www.personalnewtrition.com This salad would also be great with salmon.
10. **Walnuts** are another great food for a simple snack. They contain healthy omega 3 fatty acids and a bit of protein. In addition to being good for your heart, these fatty acids also help with brain function. Adding a couple of walnuts to a salad is a much better option than croutons.

It is truly a challenge to get a well balanced diet when living a hectic lifestyle. In addition to these Ten “Smart Foods” this month, functional foods such as orange juice fortified with calcium and vitamin D can provide a nutrition boost within a food, without

a pill. There are more and more choices to make about foods eaten every day. Empower yourself to do your own research and call a Registered Dietitian to help with your unique nutrition needs.

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