

Are superfoods really that super?

The term “superfood” first appeared over 100 years ago and interestingly was first ascribed to bananas. Today it is used to describe certain foods (e.g. blueberries, goji berries, chia seeds and avocados) that are particularly rich in nutrients associated with good health and disease prevention. While these foods can be said to be rich in nutrients like healthy fats, fibre, phyto-chemicals, vitamins and minerals, in reality there is no exact definition of what makes a food “super”. There is little scientific evidence to show that these “superfoods” are superior to other nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables, beans and pulses, wholegrains, healthy fats, dairy and lean proteins. In fact, the term “superfood” is more of a marketing tactic, designed to sell certain food items in greater volumes and often at higher prices.



The term “superfood” can also create unrealistic expectations about a particular food, making us believe that eating this will have a super effect, or that bigger portions will equal greater benefits. All foods have beneficial qualities in different contexts. Eating foods that are packed with nutrients (including “superfoods”) is a good idea, however, the key to good health is to consume a variety of nutritious foods in the right quantities. This, linked with long-term healthy eating and positive lifestyle habits like being physically active, managing stress and sleeping well, will have a combined effect to protect your health.

So, is there any reason to eat ‘superfoods’?

Yes, as part of a balanced diet. All foods have a place in a balanced and healthy diet, and you probably already know that foods like fruit and vegetables are more nutritious than a choco-late bar or a bag of crisps, meaning more of the former and less of the latter are better for us. There are many healthy foods out there that don’t have a “super” label on them, so aim to include whole foods (like fruit, veg, beans and pulses, wholegrains, dairy, nuts and seeds), in your meals as often as possible, and focus on creating realistic and sustainable habits for the long term.

Author

Hi, I’m Liza, registered nutritionist and a personal trainer. I have been working for NDPP for over 2 years. I have a particular interest in eating behaviours, how and why do we make certain decisions around food and I am also really fascinated by gut health, the trillions of microbes that live in our gut and help us to live a healthy and happy life.

References:

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