



Dr. Greger's Daily Dozen

Written By Michael Greger M.D. FACLM on July 29th, 2021

In my book *How Not to Die*, I suggest we try to center our diets around whole plant foods. Some plants are healthier than others, though. Apparently, you can live for extended periods eating practically nothing but white potatoes, for example, and by definition, that would be a whole food, plant-based diet—but not a very healthy one. All plant foods are not created equal.

The more I've researched over the years, the more I've come to realize that healthy foods are not necessarily interchangeable. Some foods and food groups have special nutrients not found in abundance elsewhere. For example, sulforaphane, the amazing liver-enzyme detox-boosting compound, is derived nearly exclusively from cruciferous vegetables. You could eat tons of other kinds of greens and vegetables on a given day and get no appreciable sulforaphane if you didn't eat something cruciferous. Same with flaxseeds and the anticancer lignan compounds: Flax may average a hundred times more lignans than other foods. And mushrooms? Well, mushrooms aren't even plants. They belong to an entirely different biological classification and contain some nutrients like ergothioneine that may not be made anywhere in the plant kingdom. So, technically, maybe I should be referring to a whole food, plant- and fungus-based diet...but that sounds a little gross.

As the list of foods I tried to fit into my daily diet grew, I made a checklist and put it up on a little dry-erase board on the fridge, and we made a game out of ticking off the boxes. This evolved into my Daily Dozen, the checklist of everything I try to fit into my daily routine. In my video *Dr. Greger's Daily Dozen Checklist*, you can see the list, the daily minimum servings I recommend and examples of foods that go into each category. My Daily Dozen includes Beans, Berries, Other Fruits, Cruciferous Vegetables, Greens, Other Vegetables, Flaxseeds, Nuts and Seeds, Herbs and Spices, Whole Grains, Beverages, and Exercise.

By Beans, I mean legumes, which also include split peas, chickpeas and lentils. It may not seem like you're eating beans when you have a bowl of pea soup, for example, or dip carrots into hummus, but you are. We should try to get at least three servings a day. A serving is defined as a quarter cup of hummus or bean dip; a half cup of cooked beans, split peas,

*"It's Never
Too Early or
Too Late to
Work
Towards
Being the
Healthiest
You"*

— Anonymous

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 **AutumnLeaves**
NZ LTD LTD

PO Box 654, Rangiora, 7440, NZ
28 Southbrook Road, Rangiora, NZ
health@autumnleaves.co.nz
ph 03 313 7762
www.lifestyleworks.nz

Treating Canker Sores with Honey

nutritionfacts.org/

Honey applied with a cotton swab three times a day after meals was compared head-to-head against an over-the-counter soothing pain-relieving paste and a prescription steroid cream. With the topical honey, there was a significant acceleration of healing and resolution of pain “with no systemic side effects”—or local side effects, for that matter—whereas the topical antibiotics that are sometimes used can have a variety of adverse side effects.

Nutritional Yeast to Help Prevent Common Childhood Infections

nutritionfacts.org

The amount of beta-glucan fiber in just a dusting of nutritional yeast a day is put to the test in a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial for the prevention of common childhood illnesses... The researchers concluded that by giving kids these yeast beta-glucans, we could “decrease the incidence and severity of infectious illness during the cold/flu season.”

Does Oil Pulling Help Dental Plaque or Gingivitis?

nutritionfacts.org

Oil pulling is put to the test head-to-head against chlorhexidine mouthwash for oral and dental health measures. What are the potential risks and benefits of the ancient practice of oil pulling, in which oil is swished or “pulled” between the teeth for 15 minutes or so and then spit out? When oil pulling was pitted head-to-head against chlorhexidine, researchers found that although chlorhexidine worked faster than oil pulling in reducing plaque, by two weeks, the oil pulling may be just as effective as the antiseptic chemical.

lentils, tofu, or tempeh; or a full cup of fresh peas or sprouted lentils. Technically, peanuts are legumes, but, nutritionally, I put them in my Daily Dozen Nuts and Seeds category. Similarly, I put green beans, snap peas, and string beans into the Other Vegetables category.

My Daily Dozen includes at least one serving of Berries a day, which is a half cup of fresh or frozen, or a quarter cup of dried. Biologically speaking, avocados, bananas, and even watermelons are technically berries, but to simplify things, I use the colloquial term for any small edible fruit. So, this category includes kumquats, grapes, raisins, and fruits that are typically thought of as berries even though they technically aren’t, like blackberries, cherries, mulberries, raspberries, and strawberries.

For Other Fruits, a serving is a medium-sized fruit, a cup of cut-up fruit, or a quarter cup of dried fruit, and I recommend at least three daily servings. Again, I’m using the colloquial rather than the botanical definition, which is why I put tomatoes in the Other Vegetables group.

Cruciferous Vegetables include broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, collards, and kale, and I recommend at least one half-cup serving a day. My Daily Dozen also calls for at least two additional daily servings of Greens, cruciferous or otherwise, and two serving of Other Vegetables, with a serving being a cup of raw leafy vegetables, a half cup for raw or cooked non-leafy vegetables, and a quarter cup of dried mushrooms.

Everyone should try to incorporate one tablespoon of ground Flaxseeds into their daily diet, in addition to one serving of Nuts and Seeds. A quarter cup of nuts is considered a serving, or you can have two tablespoons of nut or seed butters, including peanut butter. Chestnuts and coconuts don’t count nutritionally as nuts.

For my Herbs and Spices category, I recommend a quarter teaspoon a day of the spice turmeric, along with any other salt-free herbs and spices you may enjoy.

To meet my Daily Dozen, you need at least three servings of Whole Grains, and a serving can be a half cup of hot cereal (like oatmeal), cooked whole grains or so-called pseudograins (like amaranth, buckwheat, and quinoa), cooked pasta, or corn kernels; a cup of ready-to-eat cold cereal; one tortilla or slice of bread; half a bagel or english muffin, or three cups of air-popped popcorn.

The serving size in the Beverage category is one 12-ounce glass, and I recommend at least five servings a day in addition to the water you get naturally from the foods in your diet.

Finally, my Daily Dozen calls for at least one daily “serving” of exercise, which can be split up over the day. I recommend 90 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, such as walking briskly (for instance, at a pace of four miles per hour), or 40 minutes of vigorous activity, like jogging or active sports.

To help track your progress, volunteers created Dr. Greger’s Daily Dozen apps for both iPhone and Android. You can download and use them both for free with no ads and no cost.

My hope is that the checklist will serve as a helpful reminder to try to eat a variety of some of the healthiest foods every day.



Morning Grain Bowls

Ingredients:

3 c	cooked whole grains (eg: brown rice, quinoa, oats)	
¾ c	cannellini beans mashed	1 t fresh ginger (optional)
2 c	almond milk	1 c fresh berries
3 T	ground flaxseeds	1 ripe banana
1 t	ground turmeric	8 dates (soaked in boiling water)

Method:

In a microwave-safe bowl, combine the cooked grains, beans, almond milk, flaxseeds, turmeric, and ginger (if using). Mix well. Microwave for 2 to 3 minutes, or until warm but not too hot. Divide the grain mixture among four bowls. Top each serving with ¼ cup of the berries and one-quarter of the sliced banana. Place soft dates on each serving.

—Ref. <https://nutritionfacts.org/recipe/morning-grain-bowls/>