



superfruits with superpowers?

They are appearing in foods, juices, and even beauty products—and they're expensive—but how vital are superfruits for your health and longevity?

what are superfruits?

Superfruits are so named because they contain particularly high levels of antioxidants and other beneficial nutrients. They are usually brightly colored (color means protection), and include noni, açai, mangosteen, goji, pomegranate, and cranberry.

There is emerging evidence that, like their less exotic cousins in your supermarket—superfruits may help protect against cancer and diabetes, promote heart health, and raise immunity, among other things. But so far, research on superfruits is mainly from small, short-term laboratory and animal studies funded by industry. And the data is inadequate to tell if one superfruit is superior to another.

limit of tests

Many people rely on antioxidant rankings from tests, such as the Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity (ORAC). But this can be misleading, as results obtained by using mashed up fruit in a test tube cannot be assumed to equal effects in the body. Predicting the antioxidant power of foods inside people is a complicated issue, and there are currently no official recom-

mendations for how many ORAC “points” we need, although more is probably better. Different labs have also published varying results for the same superfruits, which changes their rankings.

What we do know from long-term studies with large numbers of humans is that diets rich in colorful (and commonly available) fruits and vegetables protect against chronic disease. No single food can do it all!

the bottom line

While superfruits are highly nutritious, focusing on only one is missing the point. There are several thousand phytonutrients in food and synergies exist, so having high levels of one antioxidant is not the answer. Drinking juice from the fruits also cuts out much of the fiber. Whole foods are best.

Regardless of the lack of definitive knowledge, enjoy the more exotic fruit varieties, but don't forget about getting your base diet right. Health authorities prescribe two fruits and five vegetables each day, which are readily available from your local supermarket or farmers' market.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See the latest at <http://www.sueradd.com>.