

Revealed: The 20 'functional foods' you should be eating for a long and active life

They are the foods you need for a long and active life - and it will not be much of a surprise that most are fruit and vegetables.

But there are still some everyday pleasures, such as tea, coffee and chocolate, on a list of the foodstuffs which could help you live to a ripe old age.

The 20 types of food and drink have been identified by Gary Williamson, professor of 'functional foods' at Leeds University, and he recommends that we should all make them part of our diets.

Functional foods: Many of those on the list are fruit or vegetables

He has coined the phrase 'lifespanessential' to describe the key foodstuffs, all of which contain chemicals called polyphenols.





The chemicals are produced by plants and are known for their antioxidant properties, helping prevent cancer and heart disease.

On his list, alongside such familiar 'superfoods' as broccoli, blueberries and spinach, are black or green tea, dark chocolate and coffee.

Some processed versions are also allowable - along with whole oranges, freshly-squeezed orange juice retains many of the same health benefits. The same also applies to red grapes and red wine, meaning a little luxury is compatible with living for as long as possible.



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MENU FOR A RIPE OLD AGE		
<p>Apples: Provide polyphenols</p> 	<p>Cherry tomatoes: High levels of quercetin</p>	<p>Plums: Similar role to peaches</p> 
<p>Blackberries: High levels of anthocyanins</p>	<p>Coffee: Phenolic acids</p>	<p>Raspberries: Contain anthocyanins</p>
<p>Black tea: Theaflavins</p> 	<p>Cranberries: Procyanadin, which can prevent infections</p>	<p>Red grapes: Anthocyanins and phenolic acids</p>
<p>Blueberries: High levels of anthocyanins</p>	<p>Dark chocolate: Cocoa contains epicatechin</p>	<p>Red onions: High levels of cancer-fighting quercetin</p>
<p>Broccoli: A range of health-giving polyphenols</p>	<p>Green tea: Polyphenols</p>	<p>Spinach: Polyphenols</p>
<p>Cereal bran: High in fibre and phenolic acids</p>	<p>Oranges: Contain hesperedin, which aids a healthy heart</p>	<p>Strawberries: Contain anthocyanins and ellagic acid</p>
<p>Cherries: Contain antioxidant anthocyanins</p>	<p>Peaches: Contain epicatechin and phenolic acids</p> 	

While all the foodstuffs on his list provide a range of nutrients such as fibre and vitamins, Professor Williamson is particularly interested in the polyphenols they contain.

He recommends consuming as many different foods from the list as possible, as the combination of the different chemicals they contain will maximise their benefits.

Because the exact roles of different polyphenols are still being analysed by scientists, it is not yet feasible to package them as pills in the same way vitamins are.

So Professor Williamson believes it is important to consume the foods themselves.

'These foods have been chosen because they are highest in polyphenols, which reduce the risk of heart disease and help to slow down ageing processes,' he said yesterday.

'A low intake of fruit and vegetables increases the risk of chronic disease, whereas the foods on this list maximise one's chances of reaching your potential lifespan, which is why I call them "lifespan-essential".'

According to Professor Williamson, the ability of these foods to combat disease means that not only should we be able to live an active life for longer, but that our lives will be prolonged as they reduce the risk of premature death.

But he stressed: 'They're not going to enable you to live to 200 - our lifespans are genetically pre-set and we can't do anything to change that.'

Source: Daily Mail