

bleeding in the brain (aspirin can worsen bleeding).

#### THE DOWNSIDE OF ASPIRIN

About 50,000 Americans die every year from GI bleeding caused in part by aspirin or other NSAIDs. High doses are more likely to cause problems, but even low-dose aspirin can cause bleeding in some patients.

**To protect yourself:** Be sure to talk to your doctor before taking aspirin—at any dose—on a daily basis. Let him/her know if you develop stomach pain, cramping or other symptoms after taking it.

If you experience symptoms when taking aspirin, ask your doctor about trying the enteric-coated variety. It's less likely to cause stomach upset, and it appears to thin the blood and reduce cancer risks as effectively as regular aspirin. However, enteric-coated aspirin can still cause bleeding in some people.

**What most people don't know:** Aspirin-related damage to the stomach/GI tract may not cause symptoms. **To detect problems:** Ask your doctor to perform a *fecal occult blood test* about three months after you start aspirin therapy and annually thereafter.

If it's more convenient, consider using an over-the-counter test (such as Hemocult or ColoCARE) that detects small amounts of blood in the stool, which can indicate damage to the GI tract. Discuss this first with your physician.

**Caution:** Bleeding risk is increased if aspirin is combined with certain prescription medications such as *warfarin* (Coumadin), corticosteroids and some antidepressants, as well as some supplements, including ginkgo biloba, fish oil and willow bark. Taking another NSAID, such as ibuprofen, with aspirin also increases bleeding risk.

Using high doses of aspirin has been shown to cause ringing in the ears (tinnitus) and/or hearing loss in some people, so be sure to have your hearing checked if you notice any changes in your hearing while taking aspirin. 🍎

Susan Mitchell, PhD, RD

## Had Enough Salmon and Blueberries?

Liven up your meals with these other nutritional powerhouses.

**B**y now, we all can name plenty of “superfoods,” and chances are that salmon, blueberries and spinach are at the top of your list. But what if you would like to add some variety to your diet—or never liked the taste of these highly publicized, nutritionally rich foods in the first place?

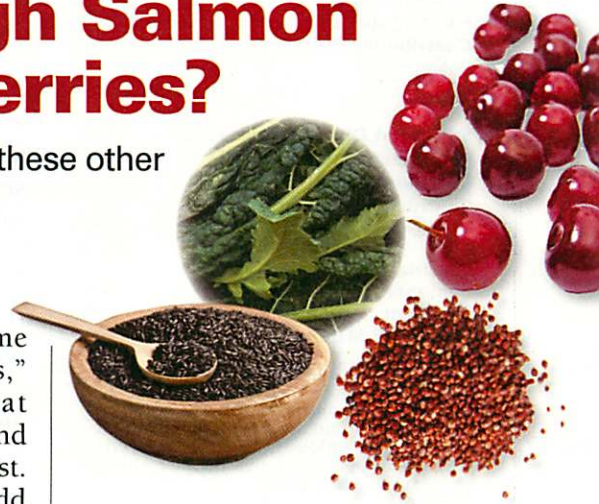
**Good news:** There are plenty of other nutritional superstars that you can try with or instead of the more well-known ones.

If you can't find any of the foods mentioned below at your local grocery store, try a specialty food store, such as Trader Joe's or Whole Foods, or an online food retailer, such as [www.LotusFoods.com](http://www.LotusFoods.com) (866-972-6879)...or [www.EdenFoods.com](http://www.EdenFoods.com) (888-424-3336).

*Tasty, underrated superfoods that are worth trying...*

■ **Instead of salmon...try red quinoa.** Pronounced “KEEN-wah,” this hearty whole grain offers a colorful alternative to popular sources of protein, such as fish and meat.

**Nutritional benefits:** Quinoa is one of the few grains that, like salmon, is considered a “complete protein”—that is, it contains all eight essential amino acids that the body needs. For this reason, quinoa is an excellent alternative for vegetarians or others who may want a tasty substitute for protein-rich salmon. One cup of cooked quinoa contains 8 g of protein—and modest amounts of a plant-based form of the heart-



healthy omega-3 fats that are found in salmon.

Quinoa is also a good source of zinc (important for immunity) as well as magnesium and potassium (both of which help reduce blood pressure). What's more, quinoa is rich in fiber—one cup of the cooked grain delivers 5 g.

**Tasty options:** Stir fluffy cooked quinoa into soups and stews...sprinkle over salads...or use in chili in place of ground beef or turkey.

■ **Instead of brown rice...try black rice.** According to ancient Chinese legend, only the ruling emperor was allowed to indulge in this extra-dark, nutty-flavored grain—that's why it's often called the “forbidden rice.”

**Nutritional benefits:** Like brown rice, black rice is rich in fiber. However, black rice is also a good source of antioxidants called *anthocyanins*, which are found in blue/purple superfoods, such as blueberries, grapes and eggplant. These antioxidants are responsible for the deep-purple hue

*Bottom Line/Health* interviewed Susan Mitchell, PhD, RD, a registered dietitian based in Winter Park, Florida. She has coauthored three books, including *Fat Is Not Your Fate* (Simon & Schuster), and is the host of “Straight Talk About Eating Smart,” a podcast on [WDBO.com](http://WDBO.com) (AM 580 WDBO is a central Florida news/talk radio station).





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**BOTTOM LINE/HEALTH** USPS 001-537 (ISSN 1092-0129) is published monthly by Boardroom Inc., at 281 Tresser Blvd., Stamford, CT 06901-3229, \$59.90/yr., \$6/issue. Periodicals postage paid at Stamford, CT, and additional mailing offices. Canadian and foreign price \$66.90/yr. (US funds). Canadian GST #: 126735513RT. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Bottom Line/Health*, Box 422318, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2318.

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that develops when black rice is cooked.

**Important scientific finding:** A spoonful of cooked black rice packs the same amount of anthocyanins as a spoonful of fresh blueberries, but with less sugar and more fiber and vitamin E, according to research recently presented at a meeting of the American Chemical Society.

**Tasty options:** For a delicious stir-fry, top black rice with mushrooms (button or portobello, for example), red pepper and pineapple.

■ **Instead of blueberries...try cherries.** Compared with blueberries, these dark red gems are definitely underrated.

**Nutritional benefits:** Cherries are loaded with healthful compounds that are believed to help prevent inflammation and possibly even some types of cancer, including colon cancer.

Cherries also are a good source of the sleep hormone *melatonin*, which helps fight insomnia and jet lag.

Research shows that tart cherry juice eases postexercise muscle soreness—members of the New York Rangers hockey team drink it for this reason.

**Important scientific finding:** In a study reported in the *Journal of Nutrition*, 18 healthy men and women who supplemented their daily diets with just over two cups of Bing cherries daily for 28 days reduced their levels of *C-reactive protein*, an inflammatory marker in the blood that can signal plaque formation, by 25%.

**Tasty options:** Sprinkle dried cherries on top of yogurt, stir them into oatmeal or make a superfood trail mix with granola, dried cherries, almonds and dark chocolate. Unsweetened frozen or dried cherries are available at Trader Joe's.

As a postexercise treat, drink five ounces of tart cherry juice with seltzer or blended into a smoothie.

■ **Instead of spinach...try kale.** Many people are wary of this cruciferous vegetable—it's big and bushy and often has a bitter smell. But when cooked, kale has a *mild* taste.

**Nutritional benefits:** Kale is packed with fiber, calcium, iron and vitamins A, C and K. (For this reason, anyone who is taking a blood thinner should avoid kale—its vitamin K content can reduce the drug's effect.) Kale also contains a chemical called *sulforaphane*, which has been linked to reduced cancer risk in numerous studies.

**Delicious cooked kale:** Wash and thoroughly dry kale, remove the center stalk and tough ends, cutting the leaves on each side into bite-size pieces. Add olive oil, chopped scallions, garlic and/or fresh pepper, if you like. Cook in a sauté pan until the kale is tender. For even more flavor, sauté in chicken or vegetable broth.

■ **Instead of sweet potatoes...try plantains.** Plantains look like bananas, but they're not eaten straight from the peel unless they're extremely ripe (when their peel turns completely black).

**Nutritional benefits:** Plantains are a rich source of potassium and vitamins A and C. One cup of cooked plantains also contains an impressive 3.5 g of fiber. What's really exciting about these fruits is their potential to help people with Crohn's disease, a chronic inflammatory disorder of the digestive tract.

**Recent study finding:** The fiber in plantains may help reduce symptoms of Crohn's disease, such as diarrhea and bleeding, according to preliminary research published in the journal *Gut*.

**Tasty options:** Popular in Latin American cooking, plantains are often fried. However, lightly broiling or grilling them will help you avoid most of the excess fat and calories of frying. Grilling or broiling ripe plantains also brings out the natural sugar. Use them as a delicious, healthful topping for vanilla frozen yogurt. 🍌