

## 15 Kid and Toddler Superfoods



It's a fact of life: Chips, cupcakes and lots of other not-so-nutritionally-noble foods are going to find their way into your child's mouth. Heck, if left to their own devices, a lot of kids wouldn't eat anything that didn't come out of a pizza or pasta box. But that's all the more reason to make sure the meals you serve up are packed with as much good stuff as possible. Parenting went to Rachel Beller, R.D., founder of the Beller Nutritional Institute in Beverly Hills, CA, a mom of four and an expert in eating for disease prevention, to get her top picks of true bite-for-bite nutritional powerhouses. Most important, they're also foods kids might actually eat. Add them to this week's shopping list!

### **Eggs**

Eggs offer protein, and they're one of the few foods that naturally contain vitamin D, which helps the body absorb calcium. Eating protein at breakfast helps kids feel satisfied longer (no mid-morning hunger pangs).

### **Oatmeal**

Research shows that kids who eat oatmeal are better able to concentrate and pay attention in school. Fiber-rich whole grains, like oatmeal, digest slowly, providing kids with a steady stream of energy.

### **Fruit**

Any fruit is good for your child, providing essential vitamins and minerals. Fruit also has fiber, which keeps kids regular. To reap the nutritional benefits, aim to eat a variety of fruits, like berries, melon, kiwi and oranges.

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[ NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with Simple Again's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you. ]

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### **Nuts**

Nuts are made up of healthy fats, which kids need for growth and development, as well as for heart health. Having a little bit of "good" fat in the morning gives your kids a burst of energy to keep them going.

### **Milk**

Protein and calcium in dairy products provide fuel for the brain and body. Protein helps build brain tissue, while milk's calcium keeps kids' bones and teeth strong.

### **Blueberries**

They've ranked among the healthiest fruits for years (go, antioxidants!). Now research suggests that in addition to protecting against heart disease and diabetes and improving brain function, blueberries may also help reduce visceral "toxic" belly

fat—a type of fat that has been linked to obesity and metabolic syndrome. Ways to get them in your kid’s diet: They’re a natural go-with breakfast choice (say, tossed into a bowl of granola and milk) and are also great in summer salads and desserts. Try making ice pops by freezing a blend of whirred-up blueberries, yogurt and some honey (after age 1).

### **Tofu**

“Whole soy foods are an excellent source of lean protein and have potent anti-cancer benefits,” says Beller. “Tofu is great for young girls because it has a protective effect as their bodies and breast tissue are developing—which lasts into adulthood.” Ways to get it in your kid’s diet: Dice and toss tofu into stir-fries or soups; use the silken variety as a sub for yogurt in fruit smoothies; snack on lightly boiled and salted edamame (soybeans)—the kids will have fun popping them out of the shells.

### **Tomatoes**

They’re loaded with lycopene—a substance that protects against many cancers. Cooking tomatoes makes them even healthier because the heat releases the lycopene. Hint: Pairing tomato-y foods with a good fat, like olive oil, helps the body absorb more. Ways to get them in your kid’s diet: Pizza and pasta sauces are obvious choices, or add tomato sauce to turkey meatballs or meatloaf if you need to disguise it. A bowl of chili and salsa for dipping are good options if you’ve got a spice lover.

### **Low-Fat Greek Yogurt**

It contains healthy bacteria known to boost immunity and aid digestion, and has two to three times the amount of protein and less sugar than regular yogurt. Add a drizzle of honey (after age 1) for sweetness, a bit of maple syrup, or try a squeeze of agave syrup (a sweetener with a lower glycemic index, so it won’t make your child’s blood sugar—and energy level—spike and then crash soon after breakfast). Agave is available in grocery stores, either in the organic aisle or where you’d find honey.

### **Cabbage**

It has a mild flavor and crunch that kids tend to like better than the usual salad greens. And cruciferous veggies such as cabbage, broccoli and kale contain phytonutrients known to lower the risk for many types of cancer, as well as improve digestion. It also helps clear harmful toxins from the body by triggering the release of enzymes whose job it is to whisk them out. Ways to get it in your kid’s diet: Make coleslaw with low-fat mayo; shred and toss it into soups or Asian noodle dishes.

### **Salmon**

It contains heart-healthy omega-3 fats, which are also known to boost brain development, fend off depression and have superb anti-inflammatory powers. Be sure to pick the wild kind, which is lower in mercury and higher in omega-3’s. Best way to get your kid to eat it: Pair salmon with ingredients he already likes. Glaze salmon fillets with orange juice or brush them with teriyaki sauce. Or serve it as salmon cakes, burgers or salad (mashed and mixed with low-fat mayo).

### **Cocoa**

You probably think of the marshmallow-studded beverage, but cocoa powder actually has one of the highest concentrations of flavonoids, a compound known to improve blood pressure and heart and oral health. They may also protect skin from sun damage. Use at least 70 percent pure cocoa and check that it isn’t processed with alkali (also called “Dutch processed”), which removes most of the flavonoids. Ways to serve it (beyond hot cocoa): Sprinkle it on pancakes, waffles or French toast, and melt some dark chocolate and dunk strawberries in it.

### **Black Beans**

“Beans are a great source of protein, as well as fiber and calcium—two things kids tend not to get enough of. The darker the color, the better they are,” says Beller. “They also help guard against heart disease and high cholesterol, which aren’t adults-only problems. I have a nine-year-old patient with very high cholesterol.” Ways to get them in your kid’s diet: Make nachos or quesadillas with black beans, cheese and salsa; try black-bean veggie burgers, or whip up black-bean hummus.

### **Basil**

This herb is packed with antioxidants—vitamins A, C and K—as well as iron, potassium and calcium and can help improve digestion. Some research shows it may even ease headaches, notes Beller. Ways to get it in your kid’s diet: Make pesto and spoon over chicken breasts or stir into cooked pasta. Does your kid freak out at the sight of little green flecks in his food? Welcome to the club! Grind basil up superfine and hide it in sauces, soups, and that ever-popular master of disguise, meatballs.