

## National Nutrition Month®: Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle

Every March, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics celebrates National Nutrition Month® to promote healthy eating and physical activity. The theme of National Nutrition Month® this year is “Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle.” This motto encourages everyone to adopt a diet and exercise routine that can help you to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk of chronic disease, and promote overall well-being.

There are many different kinds of foods that are called “super foods” in the media. You will often see claims that these foods have the benefits of promoting weight loss and reducing the risk of chronic disease, such as heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension. We will take a look at some of these super foods, and whether taking a *bite* out of them will put you on your way to a healthy lifestyle.

### Quinoa

Quinoa (pronounced keen-wah) is a whole grain native to the Andes Mountains in South America. Over 120 different types of quinoa are grown, but at most grocery stores you will see white, black, and red quinoa.



Quinoa got its reputation as a super food due to its high content of protein, fiber, and vitamins and minerals. It is one of the only plant foods that can be considered a “complete protein”, meaning it offers all of the essential amino acids. Essential amino acids are the building blocks of protein that the body only gets from food sources. Quinoa has almost twice the amount of protein and fiber as other grains. Because of this, quinoa makes you feel full for a long time after eating it, which helps to prevent you from unhealthy snacking. Fiber also

helps to lower cholesterol levels and promotes healthy bowel function.

Quinoa is usually bought in a dry form, and cooked similarly to rice. It can be included in a variety of dishes, including salads, casseroles, hot cereals, and soups. Quinoa flour is available at some stores, and can be used to make muffins, cookies, and other baked goods. So, next time you are making dinner, try to include quinoa in the meal to make it more interesting and nutritious!



### Kale

Kale is a leafy green vegetable in the same family as broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower. It is one of the few green vegetables that can grow in cold weather, and is in season from mid-summer to December. It has gotten the reputation of being a superfood because it is packed with a variety

of vitamins and minerals.

Kale is rich in Vitamin K which helps to keep your bones strong, and promotes healthy blood. It is important to note, that if you take blood-thinning medication (such as Coumadin), it may be advised that you limit foods high in Vitamin K.

Kale is also high in vitamins A and C. Vitamin A promotes good vision, along with healthy skin and teeth. Vitamin C is important for the growth and repair of body tissue. It is also an anti-oxidant which means it may help in the prevention of some types of cancer and other chronic disease. Like most other vegetables, kale is low in calories, so including it as part of a healthy diet can help you to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Kale can be eaten raw, as part of a salad, or cooked, for example sautéed with olive oil, onions and garlic. Try including it in soups, or use it as substitute for cabbage

or spinach in some recipes. Any way it is prepared, it can be a healthy addition to your diet.



### Chia Seeds

Chia seeds come from the plant *Salvia hispanica*. It is believed they were once part of the ancient Aztec diet. Chia seeds are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which have been shown to reduce inflammation in the body, reduce blood clotting, and help to lower cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Chia seeds are also high in fiber, containing 10 grams in 1

oz. of seeds (about 2 tablespoons). They are also a good source of calcium, iron, and magnesium.

Chia seeds can be eaten raw, or included in other dishes. Many times you will see them in products at the grocery stores such as in crackers or baked goods. Try adding them to smoothies, hot cereals, yogurt, or granolas. Chia seeds expand when put into liquid, so by mixing them into your smoothie or oatmeal, you will feel much fuller after your meal.

### Meet Your Goals

It is important to remember that although these “super foods” have a number of health benefits, no single food will make you healthy or cause you to lose weight. You must incorporate these foods into a balanced diet and exercise routine in order to meet your healthy lifestyle goals. For more information on National Nutrition Month®, visit the [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

### Kale and Quinoa Salad with Black Beans

*Raw kale has tough texture, so if you prefer, try steaming the kale for a few minutes to soften.*

### Ingredients

- 1 cup quinoa, rinsed very well
- 2 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon or lime juice
- 3 tablespoons low sodium vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon chia seeds
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 tsp salt, or to taste (optional)

- 4 – 6 cups chopped kale leaves (about 4-5 ounces)
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 1/2 cup grated carrot
- 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 avocado, sliced or cubed (optional)
- additional lemon juice and seasonings, to taste

### Instructions

1. Heat a saucepan. Add the rinsed and drained quinoa and the garlic and toast it until almost dry. Add the vegetable broth, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and cover. Simmer until all the water is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool.
2. While the quinoa is cooking, make the dressing in a small bowl or measuring cup: whisk together the lemon juice, 3 tablespoons broth, chia, chili powder, cumin, and salt. Allow to stand until the chia seeds start to thicken the dressing.
3. Place the kale in a large serving bowl. Add half of the dressing and massage it into the kale using a wringing motion until the kale is very tender. Two minutes of massaging should do it, but the longer, the better. Add the quinoa, black beans, carrot, and bell pepper, along with the remaining dressing. Mix well and refrigerate until ready to serve.
4. Just before serving, check the seasoning and add more lemon juice, chili powder, cumin, and salt, as needed. Stir in chopped avocado, if desired, or serve with slices of avocado on the side.

Preparation time: 25 minute(s) | Cooking time: 25 minute(s)

Recipe adapted from: <http://blog.fatfreevegan.com>

### Need a Dietitian?

Registered Dietitians are here to help you with your nutrition questions. To make an appointment call 412.692.4497 (Oakland location) or 412.623.2421 (Shadyside location).