Optimal Foods

1. **Almonds**: high in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, with 20% of calories coming from protein and dietary fiber. Nutrients include potassium, magnesium, calcium, iron, zinc, vitamin E and an antioxidant flavonoid called amygdlin also known as laetrile.

2. **Barley**: Like oat bran it is high in beta-glucan fiber which helps to lower cholesterol. Nutrients include copper, magnesium, phosphorous and niacin.

3. **Berries**: The darker the berry the higher in anti-oxidants. Nutritionally they are an excellent source of flavonoids, especially anthocyanidins, vitamin C and both soluble and insoluble fiber.

4. **Brussels Sprouts**: Similar to broccoli, and a member of the cabbage family, it contains cancer fighting glucosinolates. Nutritionally it is an excellent source of vitamin C and K, the B vitamins, beta-carotene, potassium and dietary fiber.

5. **Carrots**: It contains the highest source of provitamin A carotenes as well as vitamin K, biotin, vitamin C, B6, potassium, thiamine and fiber.

6. **Dark Chocolate**: It is rich in the flavonoids, similar to those found in berries and apples, that are more easily absorbed than in other foods. It also provides an amino acid called arginine that helps blood vessels to dilate hence regulating blood flow and helping to lower blood pressure. Choose high-quality semisweet dark chocolate with the highest cocoa content that appeals to your taste buds.

7. **Dark leafy greens**: Kale, arugula, spinach, mustard greens, chard, collards, etc: low calorie, anti-oxidant dense food with carotenes, vitamin C, folic acid, manganese, copper, vitamin E, copper, vitamin B6, potassium, calcium, iron and dietary fiber. Kale is a particularly excellent bioavailable source of calcium while spinach is not.

8. **Eggs (organic)**: A good source of low-cost high-quality protein. They are an excellent source of vitamin K, the B vitamins, selenium, and vitamin D. They can also be a good source of omega-3 fatty acids if they are fed an omega-3 rich diet. Other nutrients include betaine which promotes heart health and choline that promotes brain health. Yes they are high in cholesterol but other dietary factors such as saturated fats and trans-fatty acids are far worse at promoting increased cholesterol levels.

9. **Flax Seed (linseed) and Oil**: Native to the mediterranean, flax is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty essential acids and for a phytoestrogen known as lignans. These lignans are estrogen gatekeepers and they help to modulate estrogen levels by decreasing estrogen by transporting excess out of the system. They are a good source of dietary fiber, magnesium, potassium and manganese, phosphorous, iron and copper.
10. **Garlic and onion family:** An excellent source of B6 and a good source of manganese, selenium and vitamin C. Many of the therapeutic effects of garlic and onion are due to their sulfur containing compounds. Chopping or crushing these compounds activates these compounds that help to decrease serum cholesterol, and lower blood pressure. Garlic is also effective against common colds and viruses.

11. **Legumes:** An excellent source of folic acid and a good source of phosphorus, iron, protein, magnesium, manganese and potassium. A major benefit is the dietary fiber that helps lower insulin resistance. It is a most important food for cardiac health.

12. **Olive Oil:** An excellent source of oleic acid, an omega-9, monounsaturated fat and vitamin E. Although high in calories it is heart friendly because it is less prone to oxidation, which causes atherosclerosis, than the polyunsaturated fats.

13. **Pomegranate:** Astringent qualities that promote intestinal, urinary and gum health.

14. **Salmon:** An excellent source of protein, potassium, selenium and vitamin B12. The biggest health benefits of salmon are from their exceptionally high content of the omega-3 essential fatty acids. These fats are anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, cardiac friendly and brain boosting.

15. **Soy foods (Edamame and Tofu):** An excellent source of protein and essential oils. Nutrients include iron, calcium, phosphorous and dietary fiber. Other health promoting compounds include phytoestrols, lecithin, isoflavones, and phyhtoestrogens. Soy is available in many different forms of food now.

16. **Yogurt (organic):** It is often less allergenic than milk. It is an excellent source of calcium as the calcium in yogurt is more bioavailable than in milk. A very good source of protein, phosphorous, riboflavin and vitamin B12 and a good source of pantothenic acid, biotin, selenium, zinc and potassium. A major health benefit is improved intestinal health by helping to maintain intestinal microflora balance with yogurt that contains live cultures. These bacteria cultures can also have immune boosting properties and cholesterol lowering effects.

17. **Turmeric:** A member of the ginger family, Turmeric is the main ingredient in curry and is used in mustard as for coloring. It is a key component of both Chinese and Indian medicine. The active ingredient, curcumin, has demonstrated significant anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer and pain relieving properties.