

Asset HealthTalk

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

February 2015

SHOW YOUR THE LOVE With Heart-Healthy Foods



February is National Heart Health Month.

In addition to acknowledging those you love around Valentine's Day, why not take the opportunity to show your heart some love as well.

The food you eat has a great impact on your heart health. As a general rule, you want to incorporate as many whole foods into your diet as possible. The less processed your food, the better. Many whole foods contain heart-protective phytonutrients that you can only get by eating food in its whole unprocessed form (or ground from grains or seeds).



Here are some power foods you can incorporate into your diet that are packed with heart disease-fighting nutrients:

Vegetables: Asparagus, bell peppers, bok choy, broccoli, carrots, garlic, onions, leeks, shallots, green leafy vegetables, potatoes with skins, sweet potatoes with skins, tomatoes and acorn or butternut squash

Carotenoids: A type of antioxidant phytochemical that helps protect against heart disease. Beta-carotene is an example.

Grains: Barley, brown rice, bulgur, flaxseed, oatmeal, wheat germ

Minerals: Magnesium, potassium and calcium can all help lower blood pressure.



Legumes: Black beans, black-eyed peas, kidney beans, lentils

B-complex vitamins: Some can protect against blood clots and the hardening of arteries while others help increase good HDL cholesterol.

Soy: Soy milk, soy cheese, soy nuts, tofu, tempeh

Phytoestrogens: A type of phytochemical that may reduce the risk of blood clots, stroke and arrhythmias. It may also lower blood pressure, triglyceride levels and cholesterol.

Fruits: Apples, pears, apricots, bananas, berries, cantaloupe, citrus fruits, kiwifruit, papaya, peaches

Phytochemicals: A plant chemical that provides protection from disease and boosts immunity. Flavonoids are an example.

Protein: Salmon, tuna, natural nut butters

Omega-3 fatty acids: A type of fat that can reduce the risk of heart disease and boost immunity. Omega-3s can lower triglyceride levels, increase good HDL cholesterol, reduce blood clots, protect arteries from plaque buildup, limit arrhythmias and lower blood pressure.

Perhaps Grandma Is Right

Cold Temps Can Make You Sick

Your elders may be right; maybe you *do* need to layer up in cold winter temps to keep from getting sick. There are countless family pictures of kids bundled from head to toe, sent out to waddle around in the snow. Growing up, you may have discounted such cold weather precautions as a bit of overkill, since you learned that viruses, rather than cold weather, are what actually make us sick. However, a recent study shows that there may be truth to what was once regarded as an old wives' tale.

It is well-established that the rhinovirus – the virus responsible for the common cold – reproduces quicker in the cooler environment that's present in the nasal cavity, as opposed to the warmer lungs. However, past research has focused on the virus, rather than the body's immune system response to it. But a recent study led by Yale University

has discovered a link between our body temperature and its ability to fend off a cold. This may support the hotly-contested notion that people are more likely to get sick when it's cold.

Researchers found that lower temperatures hinder the body's ability to fight off viruses. When the body's immune response was compromised, the virus was also able to replicate at higher temps.

Further research is needed, but in the meantime, it may be a good idea to listen to grandma after all and bundle up when facing chilly weather. Perhaps wear a scarf too, and use it to cover up your nose for added immunity.

"Cold Virus Replicates Better at Cooler Temperatures," Yale University, sciencedaily.com, Jan. 5, 2015.

WARM UP With Hot Chocolate

In the cold months of winter, you may avoid hot cocoa and opt for what you think is a healthier option. Well, we have good news for you. When done right, hot cocoa can be a delicious treat that's good for your health.

The ancient Mayans were the first to discover chocolate's health benefits. They would ground cocoa beans into a brew to address a variety of ailments. Cocoa powder contains high levels of flavonols, an antioxidant that may help prevent heart disease, diabetes, dementia and stroke.

Cocoa has a protective effect against heart disease because it can lower blood pressure and cholesterol, increase good HDL cholesterol, improve blood flow to the heart and reduce blood clots.

The "hot" in hot cocoa is also important. The heat releases more of the cocoa's antioxidants. When making hot chocolate, opt for unprocessed cocoa. The more that cocoa is processed, the more flavonols are lost.

"Dark Chocolate Can Be a Healthy Treat," Lori Zantesson, chicagotribune.com, March 19, 2014.

"Hot Cocoa Tops Red Wine and Tea In Antioxidants; May Be Healthier Choice," American Chemical Society, sciencedaily.com, Nov. 6, 2003.

Healthy Hot Cocoa

(thechiclife.com)

Serves: 1

- 2 rounded teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon raw sugar (or sweetener of choice)
- 1 cup, plus 1 to 2 tablespoons milk of choice
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of ground cinnamon

1. Heat milk in a small saucepan over medium low heat.
2. Meanwhile, place cocoa powder, sugar and extra tablespoon of milk in a small bowl. Whisk until a paste forms and powder is absorbed. Add the additional tablespoon of milk, if needed.
3. Whisk cocoa mixture into the milk in the saucepan. Heat until hot, but not boiling.
4. Remove from heat and add vanilla.
5. Pour into mug and sprinkle with cinnamon. *Enjoy!*

Additional Tips:

- * Use unsweetened vanilla almond milk or coconut milk to enhance the taste.
- * Replace the vanilla with a drop or two of almond or mint extract to tweak the flavor.
- * This recipe can be made in the microwave as well.

