



818 18th Street, NW • Suite 1000 • Washington, DC 20006
202.728.7199 • fax: 202.728.7238 • www.womenheart.org

Supersize Your Heart with Superfoods *Ten smart menu suggestions from WomenHeart*

Have you heard the buzz about Superfoods? They may not wear tights and a cape, but they certainly do pack a punch. And while they sound futuristic, these heart-healthy items are simply everyday foods which researchers have found to be brimming over with nutritional power, thereby promoting optimal health — even for those who already suffer from heart disease.

In fact, a major study done by the American Heart Association has shown that diets emphasizing fresh fruit, green vegetables, whole grains and olive oil can result in a whopping 70% drop in recurrent heart disease among heart patients. Research also shows that there is a high correlation between oxidative damage and the occurrence of heart disease — which is why there's such a laser focus on Superfoods that are high in antioxidants.

The Centers for Disease Control, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and other organizations are putting their own eagle eyes on diet and nutrition during September (National Cholesterol Education Month, Whole Grains Month, and Fruit and Veggies Month) and October (which includes World Vegetarian Day and National Chocolate Day). So, the next time you're strolling the supermarket aisles, consider adding these heart-healthy items to your cart:

Almonds: Looking for a snack? Reach for almonds (preferably unsalted and unroasted), which contain important monounsaturated fats that keep arteries supple, thereby providing important protection against heart disease.

Apples: Apparently Ben Franklin was right. These lunchbox staples are loaded with an antioxidant called quercetin, which is known to help prevent the oxidation of LDL ("bad") cholesterol and improve cardiovascular function.

Beets: These low-calorie beauties are also packed full of antioxidants that contribute to the protection of arterial walls. They are often available vacuum-packed in the produce section, already precooked and ready to slice into your favorite salad.

Broccoli: Taking superfoods to new heights, broccoli boasts strong anti-cancer substances such as sulforaphane and indole-3-carbinol, while also being a major source of beta-carotene and potassium — essential to the fight against heart disease. Some studies suggest including broccoli in your diet as much as three times a week.

Chocolate: Or, rather, cocoa. Yes, it's true that a small amount of dark chocolate -- which has the highest percentage of cocoa -- can actually lead to a decrease in

cholesterol and an increase in antioxidants in the blood. Eat it sparingly, but enjoy!

Flaxseeds: A terrific source of omega-3 fatty acids, another factor in reducing heart disease, strokes, and inflammatory disease. Flaxseed is available as a seed or an oil -- toss some seeds into pancake batter or add a teaspoonful of oil to your salad dressing for a big impact on your heart health.

Olive oil: Most people have heard of the astonishing benefits of olive oil, and it's all true. Olive oil is rich in the monounsaturated fatty acids that keep LDL cholesterol in check while raising HDL ("good") cholesterol levels. Extra virgin olive oil is your best bet, as it is higher in fatty acids and antioxidants.

Soy: Soy is all the rage these days, meaning an explosion of soy items on the grocery shelves that may not always be the highest in quality or nutrition — so be sure to read the labels. That being said, soy has been shown to improve heart health, particularly since a heart-healthy diet means reducing your intake of red meat. Soy burgers, anyone?

Tea: While green tea gets most of the press these days, it turns out that black and even white teas are all excellent sources of antioxidants, reducing LDL cholesterol with every sip. The antioxidants in green tea can actually be as much as 100 times more potent than those found in vitamin C.

Wine: As if chocolate weren't enough! Research does show that there are real health benefits to drinking red wine — in moderation. This is due to the powerful antioxidants found in the red grapes used to produce the wine, which promote heart health by improving the health of blood vessels and increasing blood flow.

**Looking for more heart-healthy menu ideas and recipes?
Just check out www.womenheart.org for tasty tidbits and helpful advice.**