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## Top 15 Heart-Healthy Foods

Monday, February 25, 2013 | comments

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### 1. Yogurt

Research shows yogurt may protect against gum disease. Left unchecked, gum disease may elevate a person's risk for heart disease.

### 2. Raisins

Research has shown that antioxidants in raisins fight the growth of a type of bacteria that can cause inflammation and gum disease.

### 3. Whole Grains

People who eat plenty of whole grains tend to be leaner and have a lower risk of heart disease than those who don't. This is probably because whole grains contain antioxidants, phytoestrogens and phytosterols that are protective against coronary disease.

### 4. Beans

Eating beans regularly is good for your heart, and you don't need to eat a lot of them to benefit. A study published in the Journal of Nutrition suggests having just 1/2 cup of cooked pinto beans daily might lower cholesterol.

### 5. Salmon/Fish

Consuming two or more servings of fish per week is associated with a 30 percent lower risk of developing coronary heart disease over the long term, studies show.

### 6. Nuts

Nuts are chock-full of vitamins, minerals, heart-healthy monounsaturated fats and low levels of saturated fats. Research suggests that people who eat nuts—walnuts, pecans, almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios, pine nuts and peanuts (which actually are legumes)—two to four days or more per week have a lower incidence of heart disease than people who eat them less often.

### 7. Chocolate

50



Researchers have discovered that eating moderate amounts of flavanol-rich dark chocolate has a blood-thinning effect, which can benefit cardiovascular health, and it may also boost the immune system by reducing inflammation.

#### 8. Tomatoes

An excellent source of vitamin C, plus vitamin A, potassium and fiber, tomatoes are high in lycopene, which works with other vitamins and minerals to aid in disease prevention. Research suggests that the combination of nutrients in tomatoes may help prevent cardiovascular disease.

#### 9. Apples

Apples were associated with a lower risk of death from both coronary heart disease and cardiovascular disease in the Iowa Women's Health Study, which has been tracking 34,000-plus women for nearly 20 years.

#### 10. Berries

Eating just under a cup of mixed berries daily for eight weeks was associated with increased levels of "good" HDL cholesterol and lowered blood pressure, two positives when it comes to heart health, according to a study of 72 middle-age people published recently in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

#### 11. Pomegranates

Studies have shown that the fruit may help to reduce the buildup of plaque in arteries and lower blood pressure. Experts believe that pomegranate's benefits come from its powerful punch of polyphenols—including anthocyanins (found in blue, purple and deep-red foods) and tannins (also found in wine and tea).

#### 12. Bananas

One banana has 422 mg—about 12 percent of your recommended daily dose—of potassium. The potassium in bananas helps maintain normal heart function and the balance of sodium and water in the body.

#### 13. Popcorn

Popcorn delivers polyphenols—antioxidants linked to improving heart health. Gram for gram, popcorn boasts three times more polyphenols than kidney beans (the highest vegetable polyphenol source) and four times more than cranberries (the best fruit source), according to recent research out of the University of Scranton.

#### 14. Green Tea

Some of the strongest evidence of tea's health benefits comes from studies of heart disease. Scientists have found that those who drink 12 ounces or more of tea a day are about half as likely to have a heart attack as nontea drinkers.

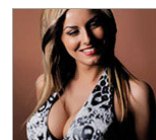
#### 15. Wine/Alcohol

Scientific literature indicates that people who drink moderately are less likely to have heart disease than those who abstain. Drinking in moderation may protect the heart by raising "good" HDL cholesterol, decreasing inflammation and "thinning the blood" (preventing clots that can cause heart attack and stroke).

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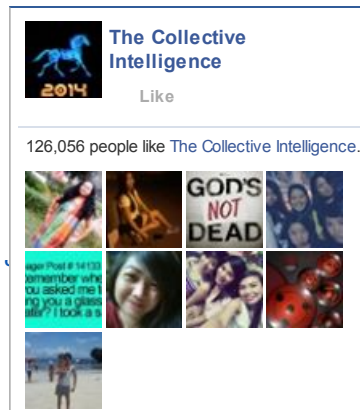
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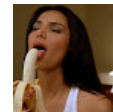
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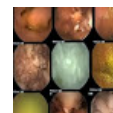


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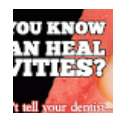


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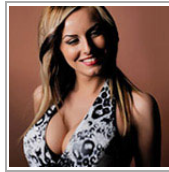
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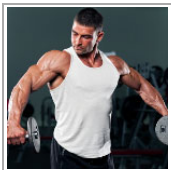
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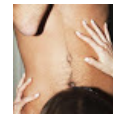
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