



Foods Your Heart Loves

What do salmon, berries, leafy greens and nuts have in common?

They are all heart-smart foods that ably nourish the body and help combat unhealthy cholesterol, hypertension and heart disease. But it's not just a single food in isolation that can help protect your heart. Rather, it's a combination of nourishing foods and a consistent pattern of healthy eating that has the greatest impact.

Studies show that 2 dietary patterns are particularly helpful for heart health: the **Mediterranean Diet** and the **Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet**. Both eating patterns are chock-full of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds, fish, poultry and low-fat dairy, and recommend reducing the consumption of red meat, sweets and salty snacks.

Both eating plans emphasize whole, unprocessed foods instead of ultra-processed foods, such as processed meats and cheeses as well as refined breads and other carbs. So, preferably choose apples and carrots rather than apple pie and carrot cake.

Together, these foods provide fiber, antioxidants, and a host of cardio-protective vitamins and minerals essential for good health. Both plans are lower in sodium, sugars and trans fat, which may raise your risk of heart disease when eaten in excess.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS

It's easy to plan your meals: Fill half your plate with vegetables and some fruit, a quarter plate with whole grains, and the remaining quarter with a good source of protein, such as fish, chicken, tofu, lentils or chickpeas.
Your heart will thank you.

Going Red for Women

With Knowledge and Action Against Heart Disease



Fact: About 80% of cardiovascular diseases can be prevented. Yet, heart disease and stroke cause 1 in 3 deaths among U.S. women every year — more than all cancers combined.

Fact: Risks for heart disease are similar for both women and men. Risk factors for heart attack you can't change include family history and age (45+ for men and 55+ for women). But, with lifestyle changes and your health care provider's help, you can control or treat the primary risks:

- High blood pressure.
- Smoking.
- Unhealthy blood cholesterol.
- Lack of regular exercise.
- Chronic obesity or overweight.
- Diabetes.



February is American Heart Month.

Fact: Heart attack signs in women can vary from what men experience. However, the most common heart attack symptom for both men and women is chest pain or discomfort — unusual pressure, squeezing or fullness in the center of your chest, lasting more than a few minutes off and on.

Women are somewhat more likely than men to also experience: shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, vomiting and jaw pain. Other symptoms common to both include pain or discomfort in 1 or both arms, the back, neck or stomach.

If you have any of these signs, call 911 for an ambulance to take you to the hospital. Note: Never drive yourself and never have non-emergency responders drive you.

National Wear Red Day on February 7 is the perfect time to learn more at GoRedforWomen.org.

Science and mindfulness complement each other in helping people to eat well and maintain their health and well-being. — *Nhat Hanh*

Signs of Stroke? Think F.A.S.T.

Every year, about 800,000 people suffer strokes.

A stroke happens when the blood supply to your brain is interrupted or reduced. Strokes can be devastating, but if you think F.A.S.T., then you may increase your chances of recovering, depending on the stroke's severity.

Use **F.A.S.T.** to identify the common symptoms of stroke:

Face: You try to smile and 1 side of your face droops.

Arms: You attempt to raise your arms and 1 side drops down.

Speech: You speak and you have slurred speech or your speech sounds odd.

Time: Call 911 immediately if you have 1 or more of these symptoms.



F for face



A for arms



S for speech difficulty



T for time

Other signs include: dizziness, trouble walking, trouble seeing with 1 or both eyes, confusion, numbness or weakness on 1 side.

Reduce your risk of strokes by practicing these safe habits: Get plenty of exercise (if okayed by your health care provider), manage your cholesterol levels and blood pressure, eat healthy and lose weight if you're overweight.

Eating disorders are not a lifestyle choice.

They are serious, complex and sometimes fatal illnesses that cause radical preoccupation with food. The most common forms are anorexia nervosa (eating very little), bulimia nervosa (eating followed by purging) and binge eating (anxiety-triggered overeating). The average ages of onset are 18 to 21 years old. Learn about **National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, February 23 to 29**, at nationaleatingdisorders.org.



Jump-Start Your Immunity

Everyday habits can either protect or weaken your immune system. Poor immunity can lead to chronic allergies, asthma and autoimmune disorders, including lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and type 1 diabetes.

Smoking and alcohol abuse are obvious enemies of your immune system.

Researchers have also found we weaken our defenses against germs, viruses and serious illness through many other lifestyle habits.

Poor sleep: It raises your stress hormone levels and inflammation. In general, daily sound sleep (7 to 9 hours) protects your health.

Poor diet: Not eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds robs you of essential nutrients (including beta carotene as well as vitamins C and E) that strengthen immunity. Kick the junk food and eat well.

Excess sugar: Eating or drinking too much sugar reduces the immune system's ability to fight bacteria, an effect that can last for hours. Satisfy your sweet tooth with fruit and drink water instead.

Chronic stress: It triggers a steady stream of stress hormones that suppress immunity and lead to disease.

Negative attitude: Have you lost your sense of humor? Practice laughing more; it pushes back stress hormones and raises white blood cells that can curb infection.

Loneliness: Having a network of good, close friends can boost immunity by easing stress and elevating your mood.

The takeaway: Take care of yourself.



Exercise on the Mind

Exercise does more than boost physical fitness: It affects how you think and feel mentally. Researchers have documented how exercise impacts your brain and emotions. In fact, just 5 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (e.g., brisk walking) can enhance mood, according to the American Psychological Association (APA).

That's because even brisk walking releases endorphins, natural chemicals produced by the nervous system which trigger a calming and feel-good effect that can help relieve depression. Exercise can also help treat and prevent anxiety and panic attacks by soothing an over-reactive nervous system, the APA notes.

Regular exercise may boost memory, too, according to University of Texas research. What's more, studies show regular aerobic workouts, over time, can improve your brain's executive function, which is home to skills needed to plan, solve problems and make decisions.

So, consider taking a walk instead of a coffee break, especially if you have a sedentary job, to lower stress levels, brighten your mood and increase your ability to focus and work well.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Lowdown on Body Fat**, is at personalbest.com/extras/20V2tools.

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