



For immediate release

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Eat Red for Your Heart

Even if you did not “Go Red” and wear red on February 5 for American Heart Month, you can “Eat Red” for better heart health.

Vegetables and fruits contain phytochemicals. These natural plant chemicals may help protect the heart by limiting the build-up of fatty plaque in artery walls. Also, plants supply antioxidant vitamins, phytoestrogens and trace minerals that may be protective. “Eating Red” during Heart Month – and beyond – can help in many ways.

One key phytochemical group is called “flavonoids.” They work as antioxidants to protect cells, and have also been shown to lessen the stickiness of blood platelets. Among this group is anthocyanin, which gives many plants their red color.

Red vegetables and fruits like apples, cranberries, cherries, leaf lettuce (dark red and green), pomegranates, radishes, red cabbage, red grapes, red onions, and strawberries are great choices. Red and green Swiss chard also is a source of sulphoraphanes, and red onions contain allium, also prevalent in garlic. Allium has been shown to produce some decrease in total cholesterol levels and in the tendency of platelets to stick, both of which are protective.

There are so many ways to enjoy fruits and vegetables. Spring salads with leaf lettuce and a red fruit like dried cherries, red grapes, or sliced apples are simple. A stir-fry of red cabbage and red onion with a touch of vinegar can lend a German touch. Fresh strawberries on your morning cereal are yet another heart-healthy idea.

In general, vegetables provide different phytochemicals than fruits, so eat them both for best heart protection. Start adding in more red choices during Heart Month, and keep adding different colors. Studies continue to show that people who eat more vegetables and fruits daily have a lower risk for heart disease, obesity, and cancer. The more fruits and vegetables add color to your diet, the healthier you are likely to be, so “Eat Red” this month for better health.

For an tasty combination of reds, try this easy salad from the kitchens of Rachel Ray.

Red Radish Salad – 4 servings

Ingredients:

2 teaspoons sugar
1 lemon, juiced
1/2 cup sour cream (try reduced fat or fat-free)
8 red radishes, thinly sliced
2 Delicious apples, quartered cored and thinly sliced
1/2 European seedless cucumber, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
Salt and black pepper

Directions

Combine sugar, lemon juice, and sour cream in a medium bowl with a fork. Add radishes, apple, and cucumber.
Turn vegetables and fruit in dressing to coat. Season with dill, salt, and pepper, toss again; serve.

For more information, visit the Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov, or the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org.

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