

## Kick Start Your Way Toward A Healthy Heart With These 10 Foods

Based on the World Health Organization, estimates show that cardiovascular disease (CVD) causes approximately 17.5 million deaths per year worldwide. The good news is that we can prevent 80% of CVD by simply exercising regularly, eating smart and maintaining a healthy weight.

Dr. Howard Weintraub, clinical director of the Center for the prevention of cardiovascular disease at New York University's Langone Medical Center, calls having high triglycerides, low HDL and abdominal obesity the Tim Russert Syndrome. As published, the NBC newsman, Tim Russert who suffered a fatal heart attack in 2008 had a low LDL level (68), thanks to medication, Low HDL(37), High triglycerides (300), high blood pressure and he was overweight.

High triglycerides and low HDL along with being overweight are the hallmarks for metabolic syndrome, in which there is increased inflammation in the arteries and a much greater likelihood of blood clots forming. Whether you have years of unhealthy eating under your belt or you simply just want to refine your diet, here are 10 heart loving foods that you can start incorporating when planning your meals.

1. **Asparagus:** High in Saponin, a phytochemical that binds bile acids and cholesterol, washing these fatty compounds from the body. Also in quinoa and alfalfa sprouts. Asparagus also contains anti-inflammatory nutrients like folate and vitamins C and D. Elevated levels of homocysteine, an amino acid in the blood, are associated with risk of CVD and stroke. Both folate and Vitamin B6, help to break down homocysteine. Foods also high in folate are fortified breakfast cereals, spinach, broccoli, potatoes, bananas and sunflower seeds.
2. **Green tea:** contains antioxidants like vit A, C and E, tannins and flavonoids that help flush out carcinogens and fight cancer. Both oxidation and inflammation are involved in the development of cardiovascular disease. A 2001, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition Study showed that a 7.5 milligram increase in intake of catechins (the flavonoid found in tea and cocoa) resulted in 20% reduction in heart disease mortality risk.
3. **Salmon & Herring:** Highest levels of Omega-3 fatty acids, which decrease triglycerides and the growth rate of atherosclerosis plaque and lower the risk of arrhythmia. Research continues to show that omega-3 fatty acids play a crucial role in heart health. Omega 3s give rise to anti-inflammatory molecules resolvins and protectins, both of which ward off blood clots. Studies have also shown that omega 3 fatty acids lower triglycerides (high levels are a risk factor for heart disease) and increase HDL "good" cholesterol.

4. **Oatmeal:** Soluble Fiber combines with water in the GI tract to form a gelatinous mass , that binds liver bile and LDL, literally like a sponge, absorbing them and expelling them from the body. Soluble Fiber, also slows down digestion and absorption of carbohydrates, giving rise to lower more stable blood glucose and insulin levels, which have a favorable effect on metabolism and arterial health. Oats are also a great source of protein, calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc, copper, manganese, thiamin, folacin, and vitamin E. Other sources of soluble fiber are whole grains, beans, brussel sprouts.
5. **Oranges:** Flavanones (a subcategory of flavonoids) decrease LDL and increase HDL. As do Oranges, grapefruits & lemons can decrease cholesterol.
6. **Papaya:** Good source of digestive enzymes and potassium. High blood pressure is perhaps the single greatest contributor to the development of heart disease. Potassium counteracts the effect of excess sodium and a diet rich in potassium has been shown to be associated with lower blood pressure levels. Potassium, also helps maintain smooth- muscle contractions like the heartbeat so potassium is one of the top three heart nutrients and papayas have more than bananas. (781 mg vs 371 mg). Additional good sources for potassium are potatoes, tomatoes, dark leafy greens, lima beans, soybeans, pumpkin seeds, avocado and almonds.
7. **Dried plums:** Contain very high levels of antioxidants. A whopping 5,770 units/100gr compared to 2,440units in 100gr of blueberries. Also high in fiber. ½ cup about 6 gr of fiber and a significant source of potassium.
8. **Sweet potatoes:** Full of vitamins and carotenoids- such as Vitamin A which inhibit oxidation of blood cells and the creation of damaging free radicals. Evidence suggests that carotenoids interact with “bad” LDL cholesterol, preventing it from oxidizing and sticking to the artery walls. IN a 2004 study in the American Journal of clinical Nutrition, women with higher levels of carotenoids in their blood had a 34% lower risk of CVD. Other foods Rich in carotenoids are kale, carrots, red bell peppers and watermelon.
9. **Walnuts:** Contain alpha-linolenic acid ALA, an omega-3 fatty acid that is a precursor molecule to the one found in herring & salmon.
10. **Chocolate:** A 2006 from the Univ. of Scranton, found that eating 6oz of *Dark* chocolate a day lowered LDL& triglycerides, raised HDL & significantly inhibited atherosclerosis. Cocoa also contains phenols which are antiseptic and anti-inflammatory. Good quality chocolate has higher than 70% Cocoa in it. Dark Chocolate is not equivalent to M&Ms.

For Heart-healthy, quick and mouthwatering recipes, register for our February cooking Class! The cooking classes sell out every month, so please reserve your seat right away!