

## TOP 20 FOODS PREVENTING CANCER AND HEART DISEASE

All too often the focus of cancer and heart disease prevention is on the use of vitamin, mineral and other nutritional supplements sold as pills in a bottle. Scientists have successfully extracted hundreds of medicinal compounds from common foods, herbs and spices that have proven to be effective in either preventing or treating cancer and heart disease. These extracts, in turn, have been converted into tablets or capsules and sold as food supplements at pharmacies and health food stores. While it is generally true that such bottled extracts are safe and effective complementary medicines, many still argue that real food is your best medicine since whole foods offer not only the purported active ingredient but also other as yet unknown complementary food factors, vitamins, minerals or enzymes. The following is a list of the most important of these foods, their postulated active ingredients as well as how they are believed to work in preventing both cancer and heart disease.

- 1) Basil contains monoterpenes, which are antioxidants known for their cancer and heart disease preventive effects.
- 2) Garlic, onions and chives contain allylic sulfides, which have antibiotic, anti-fungal and anti-parasitic properties. It also has an effect on preventing excessive blood clotting. Since many scientists now postulate an infectious etiology for both atherosclerosis and cancer, garlic may be exerting its anti-cancer, cholesterol-lowering as well as anti-hypertensive effects via its antimicrobial properties. One-half to one clove a day will reduce cholesterol by nine percent and a nine-percent drop in cholesterol will lower the risk of heart disease by 18 percent. Compounds in garlic, onions and chives, all members of the allium vegetable family produce enzymes that neutralize cancer-causing chemicals.
- 3) Berries of all kinds, especially the European blueberry (a.k.a. bilberry) are very high in bioflavonoids called proanthocyanidins and catechins, strong antioxidants known for their anti-cancer, anti-atherosclerosis effects. Strawberries contain ellagic acid, a proven cancer-fighter that protects the body's genetic material from damage by carcinogens.
- 4) Green and black tea contain polyphenols, which have a potent antioxidant, anti-cancer, and anti-heart disease effects. The bioflavonoids found in green as well as black tea help stop the accumulation of LDL cholesterol and discourage it from sticking to the artery walls. Flavonoids are also found in apples and onions, which have similar LDL-cholesterol inhibiting effects. An adequate intake of flavonoids or polyphenols for this purpose would be approximately four cups of tea, an apple and an eighth of an onion.
- 5) Turmeric and cumin are two similar spices high in curcumin, a strong anti-inflammatory compound. Curcumin can be effective for both cancer prevention and treatment. It has powerful antioxidant effects, protects the liver from damage by man-made drugs and chemicals and prevents excessive cholesterol accumulation. It reduces the risk of heart disease,

high blood pressure, arthritis and numerous inflammatory conditions. Since both cancer and heart disease involve chronic inflammation, the successful use of curcumin may be directly related to its anti-inflammatory properties.

6) Broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, rutabaga and mustard greens are vegetables all high in indoles, sulfoxide and 5-methyl methionine, all of which have potent anti-cancer effects. In addition, consumption of these foods helps improve liver detoxification pathways and cholesterol metabolism. Broccoli may be the best of these foods for fighting heart disease. One cup of broccoli provides 45 calories, 4.5 grams of fiber and supplies more than the recommended daily requirement of vitamin C and beta-carotene, both of which play a major role in combating heart disease. Fiber in broccoli has been shown to lower cholesterol levels, control hypertension, assist in weight loss. Broccoli fights cancer through its content of sulforaphane, which research indicates blocks the growth of tumors in mice.

7) Citrus fruits contain not only vitamin C but also numerous bioflavonoids including quercetin and limonoids. High doses of vitamin C have been documented to reduce elevated cholesterol levels while both vitamin C and the bioflavonoids have antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, anti-allergic and anti-cancer effects. Ruby red grapefruit is also a source of lycopene, an antioxidant similar to beta carotene which has potent cancer fighting properties.

8) Flax seeds, hempseed oil and fatty fish (especially salmon, catfish, mackerel and trout) have a high content of omega-3, omega-6 and omega-9 fatty acids as well as lignins (a soluble fiber) which have anti-inflammatory effects and can inhibit the cancer causing effects of high estrogen levels. Omega-3 oil lowers cholesterol and triglycerides, raises HDL (good cholesterol), and reduces blood clotting. These foods are effective not only in the prevention and treatment of most cancers and heart disease but also any inflammatory condition, especially the autoimmune diseases, notably rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis (M.S.), lupus, chronic fatigue syndrome and the fibromyalgia syndrome. Several excellent books have been devoted to the powerful therapeutic and preventive medical effects of these essential fatty acids, the most celebrated of which is the book by Udo Erasmus, "Fats That Heal and Fat That Kill".

9) Cultured soy products such as tofu, tempeh and miso are high in genistein and other isoflavones known for their cholesterol lowering effects as well as their ability to prevent breast and prostate cancers. Substituting soy protein for animal protein a few times a day will decrease high total cholesterol by as much as 10 percent, LDL cholesterol by 13 percent and triglycerides by more than 10 percent, but without decreasing the "good" HDL cholesterol. There is some growing controversy about the use of high amounts of commercial soy products such as soymilk, infant soy formulas and textured vegetable soy proteins (soyburgers, soy made to taste like chicken, pork or turkey etc.). These types of soy products should be

consumed only occasionally. The high content of phytoestrogens of such processed foods has been causally linked to thyroid problems, infertility and tumors, at least in experimental laboratory animals.

10) Lima Beans and other legumes like lentils are a good source of fiber and folic acid, a deficiency of which, could account 40 percent of heart attacks and strokes. One cup of lima beans provides about 10 grams of fiber. One cooked cup of lentils contains 17 grams of protein, 8 grams of fiber, more than 35 percent of your iron and potassium needs and 175 percent of the RDA for folic acid (the B vitamin folate).

11) Mustard and watercress contain isothiocyanates that have strong anti-cancer effects. In one study, lung cancer in experimental animals exposed to tobacco smoke was prevented if the animals were fed watercress.

12) Tomatoes are high in the antioxidant, lycopene, which has powerful anti-cancer effects. One recent study from Italy found that people who ate 7 or more servings a week of raw tomatoes were 60% less likely to develop cancer of the stomach, colon or rectum compared to those who ate two or fewer servings each week.

13) Carrots and carrot juice are high in beta carotene, an antioxidant with both anti-cancer and anti-heart disease effects. Two carrots every day supply enough beta-carotene to cut the risk of stroke in half in men who have signs of heart disease. Women who eat five or more servings of carrots a week have a stroke rate 68 percent lower than those who ate no more than one serving.

14) Daikon radish, a vegetable which looks like a huge white carrot, which you peel and cut into sticks. Like its broccoli cousin, daikon contains indole-3-carbinol, which prevents excessive estrogen buildup that may promote breast cancer.

15) Nuts and seeds like almonds, walnuts, pecans, pumpkin seeds and macadamia can lower the risk of heart disease. One 1992 study revealed that people eating a handful of nuts four times a week had 50% fewer heart attacks. Other studies generally conclude that men and women consuming the most nuts have the fewest heart attacks. While nuts are high in fats, its mainly the good kind of fats – the polyunsaturates and monounsaturates, linolenic acid and vitamin E.

16) Cantaloupe is a rich source of the antioxidant vitamins beta carotene and vitamin C. A quarter of a cantaloupe provides 86 percent of the daily requirement of beta-carotene and 94 percent of the daily requirement of vitamin C.

17) Oat bran cereal or muffins. Several studies indicate that about two ounces of oat bran daily will decrease cholesterol an average of 16 percent.

18) Greens in general, especially collard greens, green peas, celery, kale, broccoli and spinach contain lutein and zeaxanthin, carotenoid pigments which have cancer fighting properties as well as the ability to fight macular degeneration, the commonest cause of blindness. Greens are also high in folic acid, vitamin C, calcium, magnesium and potassium. Celery is also high

in a phytochemical called 3-n-butyl phthalide which has been shown in some studies to lower blood pressure as much as 10% in those with elevated blood pressures. About 4 ribs of celery consumed each day is the amount usually recommended to produce this blood pressure lowering effect.

19) Sweet red peppers are cancer fighting due to their high content of lycopene, an antioxidant found in high amounts in tomatoes as well as ruby red grapefruits. Hot peppers, on the other hand, contain the phytochemical, capsaicin, which is a neutralizer of known carcinogenic chemicals such as nitrosamines. Capsaicin may also protect us against stomach ulcers by killing the bacteria (*H. pylori*) responsible for ulcers.

20) Rosemary is a fragrant herb with strong preservative properties. Animal studies indicate that consuming small quantities of rosemary prevents cancer. It can be added to most cooked foods.

## REFERENCES

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These books are available at most book stores, health food stores, libraries or by mail order from the web site (<http://www.srvitamins.com>).