

Health & Fitness

Love Your Heart!

by Tzabia Siegel, BAPhEd, CHN, NNCP, Toronto Athletic Club Clinic for Sport Medicine

With February being the month of heart health and Valentine's Day (a different concern of the heart), this is the time to consider what you can do to love your heart. Is your blood pressure up or concern for heart disease got you down?

10 Ways You Can Nourish That Lil Ol' Heart:

1. **Gotta eat your greens** – spinach, kale, collards, rapini, watercress – look for any veggies that are deep green. They'll be rich in the heart-loving minerals magnesium and potassium, as well as phytosterols.
2. **Eat steel cut or rolled oats (or barley) for breakfast** – these whole grains are rich in the cholesterol-lowering fibre, beta-glucan.
3. **Get familiar with the other whole grains** – buckwheat, brown and wild rice, quinoa, amaranth, millet all provide magnesium, niacin, phytosterols which have cardio-protective effects.
4. **Fatty fish and fish oils** – the blessed omega 3's can reduce LDL cholesterol levels as well as blood pressure.
5. **Raw garlic** – eat it and risk smelling like a bulb or take odor free capsules if you want support for lowering cholesterol.
6. **Walnuts** – these brainy looking nuts are presumed to help preserve the elasticity and flexibility of the arteries. Ideally, eat them fresh from the shell.
7. **Vitamin D** – new research points to Vitamin D deficiency increasing the risk of fatal heart attacks. Supplementation with at least 2000mg. during the winter is indicated.



8. **Pomegranate and its juice** – may be indicated for lowering blood pressure, high cholesterol and arteriosclerosis but further research is needed. Either way, this rich red fruit is full of vitamin C and antioxidants. If you don't like pomegranates, go for kiwi, apples, grapes or any other fruit. They all contain lots of phytochemicals.

9. **Dark Chocolate** – 6 gms/day (minimum 70% cocoa) has been shown to reduce blood pressure. Cocoa contains flavonols, which are also in grapes and red wine. Enjoy but keep your intake to only one or two squares per day.

10. **Yoga** – no, its not food, but it is nourishment. Yoga, qi gong, and meditation have all been scientifically linked to lowered blood pressure and stress, two high risk factors for heart disease.

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