



Nutrition News

Feeding the world with knowledge

Heart Health



February 2018

More Reasons to Go Mediterranean

Fruit and vegetable heavy diets rank as best overall



Which diet is THE BEST? According to the 2018 *U.S. News & World Report Best Diet* rankings, an expert panel rated the Mediterranean #1 best overall out of 40 different diets. There was a tie for first place this year and a common theme among the top diets is the emphasis on consuming fruits, vegetables, whole grains along with lean meats. Both are also considered easy to follow which is

great news, just in time for Heart Health Month.

The Mediterranean diet specifically, has been associated with cardiovascular protection among other benefits such as longevity, improved blood flow and kidney health. As published in *BMC Medicine*, researchers evaluated diets of almost 24,000 non-Mediterranean participants to understand how compliance with the Mediterranean diet pyramid related to cardiovascular disease and death. Diets were evaluated via food frequency questionnaire and over a 7 year period they found a lower incidence of cardiovascular disease and death with higher adherence to the Mediterranean diet.

Not familiar with the diet? Main principles include a focus on vegetables at mealtime, with meats and starches as the side dishes. Instead of chicken with vegetables, think of having grilled vegetables with pieces of grilled or marinated chicken on the side or a pasta primavera filled with vegetables with meat as a garnish. Greek or plain yogurts are also included. Seafood is enjoyed at least twice a week, and a meatless meal makes the lineup weekly as well. Butter is replaced by olive oil; refined grains are replaced by whole grains such as barley, faro or brown rice. Lastly dessert is always fresh or dried fruit. These small changes add nutritional elements such as heart healthy fats and fiber that help promote satiety and keep us feeling our best.

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Some of our Mediterranean favorites include:

[Pastalicious Arugula Salad](#) – Make ahead and enjoy for an easy lunch.

[Mediterranean Tuna Casserole](#) – A quick, warm and satisfying dinner that'll be ready in 20 minutes.

[Minestrone Soup](#) – Make ahead and then freeze in individual portions making lunchtime decisions as easy as a Mediterranean breeze!

A Bark That's Good for Your Heart

Spice slashes fat and heart attack risk by 10%



Now that we're well into the colder months, you may be looking for ways to keep things interesting to avoid midwinter boredom. Cinnamon could be just the thing you're looking for to spice up your diet and improve heart health. The warm and aromatic spice has become a common household staple. Originally from South East Asia, it's a fragrant spice made from peeled, dried and rolled bark. Research has shown that it has been linked to reduced abdominal fat and improved gut health, increased HDL (good cholesterol) and now new research published in *Lipids in Health and Disease*, shows that it could cut heart attack risk by 10%.

Investigators looked at the effects of oral cinnamon in a double blind, randomized, controlled trial within a group of 116 Asian Indians with metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome is a condition where an individual may have a group of symptoms including abdominal obesity coupled with impaired glucose tolerance, poor cholesterol levels as well as hypertension. Over 16 weeks, 58 participants were given 3 grams of cinnamon daily via capsule, while the other 58 individuals were given a placebo. Prior to the start of the intervention, all participants were provided with dietary advice in accordance with the Dietary Guidelines for Asian Indians, plus counseling regarding physical activity. These habits were to be implemented for four weeks before the cinnamon (or placebo) was administered.

Interestingly, those that took cinnamon experienced significant decreases in fasting blood sugar along with improved lipid panels and blood pressure as compared to the placebo group. Three grams of cinnamon is just over 1 teaspoon which can easily be achieved through diet. Try our [Banana and Blue Breakfast Smoothie](#) for ¼ tsp per serving or [Banana Berry Breakfast Cups](#) will get you ¾ tsp per serving while smaller amounts of cinnamon in dishes like [Jerk Chicken with Pineapple Salsa](#) or [Moroccan Fruit Salad](#) can really add up quickly. You can even add ½ -1 tsp to coffee ground before brewing to sneak the benefits into your morning brew. Experiment with cinnamon at home to see how you enjoy it most.

Marital Bliss

Positive heart health benefits associated with life partnerships



Your spouse; there are times when it feels like you can't live with them and you can't live without them. Marital relationships have a unique dynamic; your partner can affect your health both positively and negatively. New research now suggests that married patients have improved survival after a heart attack.

A study presented at the European Society of Cardiology took a closer look at the effect of marital status on survival in patients with cardiovascular risk factors or a previous heart attack. They reviewed a database of patients called the Algorithm for Comorbidities, Associations, Length of Stay and Mortality (ACALM) from 2000-2013. Out of over 900,000 patients, they found that just over 300,000 had a previous heart attack, elevated blood pressure, high cholesterol or high blood sugar. Each was identified as single, married, divorced or widowed.

At study's end, of those who experience a heart attack, married patients were 14% more likely to survive. But that's not all; those with high cholesterol were 16% more likely to be alive at end of study if they were married and those with diabetes and high blood pressure also experienced a benefit of 14 and 10% improved survival rates respectively.

Having a healthy relationship can enrich our lives both physically and mentally. Researchers in this study suggest that marriage plays a protective role by offering emotional support and a partner in living a healthy lifestyle including medication adherence. Senior author Dr. Rahul Potluri suggests the findings are important for people silently living with cardiovascular risk factors like high blood pressure and diabetes that put them at risk for heart attack.

So this Valentine's Day, say thank you to your sweet heart by sharing a sweet treat like our [Heart in Hand Tarts](#).

Vitamin K is for Kids

K deficiencies and heart health



A big heart in relationships and in life is a beautiful thing. It represents desirable attributes like kindness, thoughtfulness, compassion, and understanding. However, if you literally have a big heart it could be due to an unhealthy enlargement of your heart's major pumping chamber, the left ventricle (LV). This condition is most often seen as a result of high blood pressure in adults whose hearts have been working overtime to pump blood out to the body. Evidence suggests that this enlargement, considered a structural abnormality, may begin in childhood, increasing likelihood of cardiovascular disease as an adult.

Researchers have begun to look to vitamin K in the diet because some adult studies have suggested reduced progression of cardiovascular disease (CVD) with adequate intake of the vitamin. Researchers at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University set out to learn more about vitamin K intakes in children and how they relate to the condition. Their study was published in *The Journal of Nutrition*.

In this study 766, 14-18 year olds were given a full screening including height, weight, and LV structure and function via echocardiography. Their diets were assessed for macronutrients like carbohydrates, protein, fat and vitamins including vitamin K, by a registered dietitian, 3-7 times over 12 weeks. Interestingly, they found that only 25% of participants met the Adequate Intake (AI) for vitamin K. As for the heart, LV enlargement was observed and it decreased as intake of vitamin K increased towards the AI. This is believed to be the first study of its kind to look at this nutrient in the pediatric population.

Need a refresher? The name Vitamin K comes from the German word koagulation, in reference to the vitamin's first-known role in blood clotting. It's a fat soluble vitamin that also helps strengthen bones, fight cancer and prevent heart disease. Vitamin K can be found in two forms. K1 from plant sources like green vegetables like kale, spinach, collards and broccoli, also the kind measured in the study, as well as K2 which is found in animal sources like meats and eggs. Just one serving of our [Vegetable Kale Au Gratin](#) provides 120% of the daily value.

Avoid Getting Salty with This Hot Tip

Spicy foods may significantly reduce salt preference



According to the latest *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, most Americans consume more sodium than they should...to the tune of more than 3,400 milligrams per day. Sodium intake at this level presents a few concerns, which include putting us at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. The recommendation is to aim for less than 2,300 milligrams per day. Where does sodium come from and how does it add up so quickly? You may think your salt shaker is to blame, but in reality, more than 75% of the sodium intake in the US comes from processed foods and restaurant meals.

If sodium is a concern for you, consider eating more potassium rich fruits and vegetables like bananas and spinach. Research shows that potassium can help reduce blood pressure. Alternatively, new research published in *Hypertension* suggests that spicy foods may have a profound effect on salt appeal. Six hundred six adults were interviewed and asked their preference for salty or spicy flavors. Their preferences were then compared with blood pressure, where scientists found that those who had an inclination for spice, had lower salt intake as well as lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure numbers. Investigators also looked at the part of the brain responsible for subjective taste intensity, known as the insula. They found that when a small amount of capsaicin, a compound in peppers that contributes pungent eye watering tang, was consumed, even if it did not contribute a hot flavor, perception of saltiness increased. This is explained by imaging that shows that the brain regions activated by capsaicin overlapped with the regions stimulated by salty taste. Researchers explained that increased brain activity likely makes people more sensitive to salt so that they can enjoy food with less of it!

For both a potassium punch and a hint of spice you may like our [Hot and Spicy Plantains](#) or our [Spicy Plantain Soup](#).

Get Your Groove On!

Dancing benefits the brain as well as the body



Waltz, Foxtrot, Tango, whichever you fancy there's no doubt that dancing is an enjoyable hobby that can be appreciated at all stages of life. Lucky for your dancing feet, it's also a great form of exercise that also has benefits for your brain. As we age, functions like memory, learning, and navigation tend to decline. These are controlled by the hippocampus (HC) of the brain, which also plays a role in balance control and diseases like Alzheimer's.

New research published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, reveals that older adults that exercise can reverse signs of an aging brain, however dancing was most beneficial. Fifty two healthy older adult volunteers between 63-80 years old enrolled in the study which compared dancing with aerobic exercise over 18 months. Participants were screened for cognitive and physical function at the beginning, midpoint and end of the intervention and they were randomly assigned to the dance or the aerobic activity group. Interestingly, researchers found that both activities showed an increase in HC function, however only dance was associated with a significant improvement in balance. Investigators believe that the extra challenges presented by speed, tempo, rhythm, arm motions and a new "routine" each week are responsible for the benefit.

Current research suggests that exercise in general can help battle age related brain decline; this is the first study that shows that a specific type of exercise is better than another.

FEATURED RECIPE

Heart in Hand Tarts

Ingredients:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole-wheat flour
- 2 tablespoons crushed flaxseed
- 2 teaspoons whole flaxseed, optional
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 7 tablespoons canola oil
- 6 to 8 tablespoons cold water
- 1 cup fresh DOLE® Blueberries or DOLE Raspberries
- 1-½ teaspoons honey, divided
- ½ teaspoon milled chia seeds
- 1 DOLE Banana, peeled and sliced



Makes: 8 Servings

Total Time: 50 Minutes

Directions:

1. **PREHEAT** oven to 350°F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper, set aside.
2. **STIR** together flours, flaxseeds and salt. Add oil and 6 tablespoons water. Blend until mixture begins to pull together into dough, adding additional water as needed.
3. **DIVIDE** dough into two pieces. On a lightly whole-wheat floured surface, roll one piece until 1/8-inch thick. Using a 3-inch heart-shape cookie cutter, press out 8 hearts. Transfer hearts to prepared baking sheet. Gather scrapes and gently work into remaining dough. Roll remaining dough until 1/8-inch thickness and press out another 8 hearts, set aside.
4. **TOSS** berries with 1 teaspoon honey and chia seeds, set aside. Shingle 2 banana slices in the middle of 8 hearts. Top with a spoonful of berries. Arrange a second heart on top and gently press down the center, pushing the edges to meet. With a fork, press the edges together, sealing them. Cut-out heart-shape vents in top crusts and fill the opening with additional berries, reserving the rest.
5. **BAKE** 30 minutes or until crust is crisp and fruit is bubbly. Remove tarts from the oven, spoon remaining berries into the vent and lightly brush the crust with remaining honey. Store in an air-tight container.

EDITORIAL TEAM

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