

Tea- Black Tea is Good for Your Heart

In the United States, more people die each year from heart disease and stroke than any other illness. And, the saddest part is that most of the causes of heart disease are completely preventable. While it's true that heredity plays a part in heart disease, lifestyle plays a more important role for most people. So, what can you do to help prevent heart disease? Well, there are three areas to consider when attempting to reduce your risk of heart disease. The Things You Shouldn't Eat

A diet high in fat and cholesterol can lead to heart disease. Therefore, limiting your intake of these foods is critical to managing your heart health. In addition, eating too many calories can cause you to be overweight, which is also a contributor to heart disease. First let's look at cholesterol and fats

Cholesterol comes in two forms. LDL cholesterol (low density lipoproteins) is what is known as "bad cholesterol". When too much LDL circulates in the blood, it can build up in the inner walls of your arteries, where it forms plaque that hardens and narrows the arteries. This condition is called atherosclerosis. Narrow arteries make it easy for a clot to form and cause a block, and they also restrict blood flow. Peroxidation is the process that turns the cholesterol into the hard plaque that sticks to arterial walls. HDL cholesterol or (high density lipoproteins) is what we refer to as "good cholesterol". HDL cholesterol carries bad cholesterol away from the heart and deposits it to the liver so that it can pass from the body. We need this cholesterol to be high, because it protects us. When your HDL levels are too low, the LDL cholesterol is in control. It's important to understand your cholesterol levels and do your best to improve them if they're not where they should be by eating the right diet. Avoid foods like butter, egg yolks and red meat. When you eat fat, make it the sort that raises your HDL levels, by including olive oil, canola oil and nuts in your diet. Avoid foods that contain trans fats and any fats that say "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated". It's also important to watch the sugar and sugar like substances that you consume, because these can make you gain weight. Avoid any food that contains "high fructose corn syrup". This is a sort of "super sugar" that our body finds difficult to process. As a result it simply turns to fat. Also watch your intake of white flour products. Enriched white flour has few nutrients and is essentially processed by the body like sugar. It, too, can help you gain weight. The Things You Should Eat (and Drink)

Your diet should be centered around lean protein like fish and chicken and lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. When you grocery shop, avoid the center aisles, where the processed foods are located, and choose most of your groceries from the outside perimeter of the store, where the fresh foods are located. In particular, choose foods rich in anti-oxidants, like berries, asparagus, broccoli, pomegranates, tomatoes and grapes. In addition to choosing foods with lots of anti-oxidants, don't forget to include tea in your diet. Much research has shown that tea's anti-oxidants are beneficial to heart health. One study, conducted by the Department of Medicine at the University of Western Australia, found that ingestion of black tea contributed to dilation of the arteries and blood vessels that support the heart. This is important, because one of the precursors to heart disease is endothelial dysfunction, a situation where arteries that support the heart don't dilate properly. It's been clear for some time that drinking tea can reduce cholesterol levels, but this study demonstrates that tea may have other benefits, too. Participants in this study drank 5 cups of black tea each day for four weeks and were compared to participants who drank 5 cups of water each day for four weeks. At the end of the study, the participants who consumed tea each day showed significantly higher endothelial function as compared to the participants who drank hot water instead. So, tea is a healthy addition to your diet for heart protection.

Exercise

Exercise is one of the most important things you can do for your overall health, and particularly your heart health. Exercise helps regulate cholesterol levels, insulin levels and blood pressure. In addition, regular exercise helps keep your weight under control. Get at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise 3-5 times each week. For the best results, add weight training to your routine 2-3 times a week. Weight training will help you burn more calories even at rest and will help keep your body strong. Managing these three areas of your life, along with avoiding smoking, are the keys to a healthy heart. So, be sure to get your exercise, avoid unhealthy foods and eat your share of lean protein and anti-oxidant rich fruits and vegetables. And, don't forget to drink a cup of tea with all those healthy meals!

About the Author

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