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Improving Heart Health with Food and Supplements

by Laura Kovalcik, D.O.

Wouldn't it be great to reduce your chances of developing heart disease? These foods and supplements support healthy blood levels for cardiac health:

1. Fiber – Fiber helps move cholesterol through the intestinal tract more quickly and binds with some of the cholesterol, preventing it from being absorbed. Fiber is found predominantly in **whole grains, beans, legumes, vegetables and fruits**.

2. Fruits and Vegetables – Eating several servings of these daily provide not only fiber but antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. **Green leafy vegetables**, are strongly associated with decreased risk of cardiovascular disease. **Cruciferous vegetables** such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and kale; and **citrus fruits** also made important contributions.

“When researchers combined findings from the Harvard studies with several other long-term studies in the U.S. and

Europe, and looked at coronary heart disease and stroke separately, they found a similar protective effect: Individuals who ate more than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day had roughly a 20% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, compared with individuals who ate less than 3 servings per day.”¹

It's very important to eat organic fruits and vegetables as much as possible.

3. Supplements - CoQ10 is a commonly used supplement that supports mitochondrial function in very active muscle cells and especially the heart. Therefore it improves symptoms of congestive heart failure. Some research suggests that CoQ10 might help ease muscle weakness sometimes associated with taking statins.

Niacin and Fish Oil help reduce triglyceride levels and raise HDL levels. In fact, these natural supplements have been converted to prescription medications selling at much higher prices, under the names of

Naispan (Niacin extended release version) and Lovasa, Omtryg or Vascepa (Omega 3 oils).

Other Supplements often recommended to support a healthy heart include **magnesium, Hawthorn and taurine**.

It's also important to avoid certain foods to prevent heart disease, including red meats, dairy and high-sugar products (due to the inflammation they cause in the body), fried foods and fast foods.

4. Make sure you exercise often as well. Recommendations are for 30 minutes, five times per week.

¹. hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits

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