

Old News ... Latest News On Foods and Drinks

Nuts To You

Old News: Although nuts are valued for protein, vitamins, and minerals, they are too fatty, caloric, and salty.

Latest News: Recent studies show that nuts can help prevent heart disease. They are rich in unsaturated fats, including monounsaturated fats, as well as vitamin E, fiber, folic acid, and other B vitamins. Choose unsalted nuts and don't eat huge amounts. Add nuts to salads, cereals, and rice dishes. Walnuts are especially rich in heart-healthy oil.



Butter or Margarine

Old News: Once touted over butter, margarine is made from vegetable oil and thus has no cholesterol and much less saturated fat than butter. Then it turned out that margarine, because the oil is hydrogenated, contains trans fats, which are as bad for your heart as the saturated fat in butter.

Latest News: Some new margarines contain no trans fats. If you can find it, canola oil margarine is a good choice. Or try liquid, tub or "diet" margarines, which have less trans fat. To reduce your blood cholesterol levels you might also try the new margarines such as Benecol or Take Control, which contain a cholesterol-lowering ingredient. However, if you eat only small amounts of butter or margarine - and follow a healthy diet - it doesn't really matter whether you choose margarine or butter.

Pillars of Salt

Old News: The more salt you eat, the greater your chances of getting high blood pressure.

Latest News: High sodium intake may not lead to high blood pressure - unless you are sodium-sensitive. But since it's impossible to know who's sodium-sensitive in advance, it makes sense to consume less than 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day - a little more than a teaspoon of table salt. This means avoiding highly saturated processed foods, such as chips, crackers, and most canned soups. Another salt fact: a high sodium intake might reduce bone density.

Soy Futures

Old News: Soybeans are just another item on the commodities exchange.

Latest News: Soy is good food, well worth adding to your diet - as soybeans, tofu, soy flour, or soy milk. Soy protein may help lower cholesterol and have anti-cancer effects. Food containing moderate-to-high levels of soy protein can now sport an official health label: if you eat 25 grams of soy protein in the context of a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet, it can help lower the risk of heart disease. But while it's good food, it's not a magic bullet. Like all plants soy beans are a mixture of complex substances with many potential effects in the body, some beneficial, some not.

Not a Corny Idea

Old News: Corn is not as nutritious as whole wheat.

Latest News: Corn is also a "whole grain." Yellow corn is rich in such carotenoids as lutein and zeaxanthin, which may help keep your eyes healthy. And popcorn made from yellow corn has these same nutrients. White corn, while tasty, is less nutritious.



Red Wine, White Wine, Spirits, Or None of the Above

Old News: Red wine, alone among alcoholic beverages, is beneficial.

Latest News: Moderate consumption of any alcoholic beverages - red or white wine, beer, or spirits - can be heart-healthy. Moderate means one drink a day for women, two for men. A drink is defined as 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor. It's now thought, as well, that grapes, grape juice, and therefore all wines, may also contain compounds that benefit health.

Garlic and Onions, A Happy Family

Old News: Flavorful and zesty, if you like them; also a major cause of bad breath. Not very nutritious.

Latest News: The whole garlic family (which also includes leeks, chives, shallots, and scallions) contains allylic sulfides and other compounds that may work against tumor formation and benefit the heart. There's no certainty, though, that cooked onions, garlic, and so on are as effective as raw. And you should not rely on garlic as a way to reduce blood cholesterol. Supplements remain unproven.

Eggs With a Sunny Side

Old News: Don't eat eggs. A single egg has 215 milligrams of cholesterol - two-thirds of the daily maximum.

Latest News: Saturated fat - and eggs contain very little - plays a bigger role in raising blood cholesterol than dietary cholesterol. A daily egg may have little effect on the risk of heart disease in healthy people. This does not include people with high cholesterol levels, or diabetics, or others with heart disease risk factors. But if you know you're healthy and that your cholesterol is at a desirable level, you can eat a daily egg.

You Say Tomato

Old News: A good source of Vitamin C, especially fresh tomatoes.

Latest News: Yes, tomatoes offer Vitamin C, a lot else besides. It turns out they are rich in important carotenoids, including lycopene - a relative of the more celebrated beta carotene. Lycopene appears to help prevent prostate cancer. Oddly enough, cooked and processed tomatoes contain lycopene that's more readily available to the body. Ounce for ounce, processed tomato products (such as sauce, paste or juice) contain 2 to 10 times as much available lycopene as fresh tomatoes.



The Shellfish Game

Old News: Shrimp are rich in cholesterol and don't belong in a heart-healthy diet.

Latest News: Shrimp have more cholesterol than any other shellfish except squid: about 195 milligrams per 3.5 ounce serving (the daily limit is 300 milligrams). But the cholesterol in shrimp may not be as much of a problem as cholesterol in other foods. And shrimp are very low in saturated fat - only 0.3 grams in that serving. In addition, shrimp contain heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.

Coffee is Off the Hook

Old News: Coffee and caffeine are bad for your health.

Latest News: By now the most thoroughly studied beverage in the world, coffee is not known to cause heart disease or to promote any kind of cancer or stomach ulcers. It can cause coffee nerves and jitters if you drink too much of it. Most people like the brief lift that caffeine provides, and it is not known to be harmful for healthy people. But if you decide to stop drinking caffeinated coffee, do so gradually to avoid

the headache that caffeine withdrawal temporarily causes.

Yogurt's Wheys and Wherefores

Old News: Yogurt helps you live to a ripe old age.

Latest News: The idea that yogurt promotes longevity was based on hearsay. Yogurt is an excellent food, particularly if you stick to nonfat or low-fat varieties without a lot of added sugars. Lactose-intolerant people can digest yogurt. Will yogurt counteract diarrhea caused by antibiotics? Will it cure vaginal yeast infections? If you eat yogurt containing live cultures of *L. acidophilus*, there's some evidence it may help with both these problems. But don't count on it. It's a food, not a medicine.

Orange You Glad You Asked?

Old News: Citrus fruits contain lots of Vitamin C.

Latest News: The Vitamin C is still there. But oranges, grapefruits, lemons, and limes also contain a wide range of important phytochemicals that may help protect against cancer and stroke.

Tea - Your New Best Friend?

Old News: A pleasant beverage.

Latest News: All teas - green, black and red (but not herb teas) - contain a range of beneficial chemicals that may reduce the risk of many cancers and that act as antioxidants. Drinking tea regularly may protect arteries from plaque build-up. Tea does not, as was once believed, promote bone loss.

Chocolate Improves Its Image

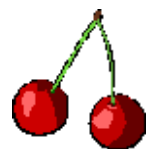
Old News: It's bad for you, period.

Latest News: Maybe not so bad. Chocolate contains large amounts of the same beneficial plant chemicals that now have burnished the reputation of tea (see above). In fact, just one ounce of chocolate has about as much of these plant chemicals as a cup of brewed black tea. One large, ongoing study of the benefits of exercise found that men who eat chocolate in moderation (one to three bars a month) live longer than those who eat none. And moderation remains the word.

Cherries, Blueberries, Beets, Peppers

Old News: Good food, but no better than lighter colored fruits and vegetables.

Latest News: Deeply colored fruits and vegetables tend to have the most vitamins and minerals. And besides that, the plant pigments that give them such rich colors may themselves protect against chronic diseases, including cancer. These pigments have high antioxidant potential. This doesn't mean you shouldn't bother with cauliflower, green grapes, or white potatoes. But do include some of the "darks" - such as kale, spinach, prunes, red grapes, raisins, cherries, oranges and carrots.



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