

Top 7 Foods for a Healthy Heart

By Claudia Ehrlicher



Most of us tend to live a very busy lifestyle: long commutes, a hectic environment, a busy work schedule and trying to fit in time for family and friends.

But that means that we're often neglecting our health. Regular exercise, stress prevention and a healthy diet fall to the wayside and increase the risk of heart diseases (cardiovascular diseases, CVD).

All too often, we go for fast food, chocolate, biscuits, crisps and other fatty food, washed down with sugary drinks or alcohol.

It stills the hunger, yes; it may improve our mood or give us some energy for a short time, yes; but is it healthy? No, of course not! We know that. But what can be the consequences?

- Weight gain (even leading to diabetes)
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Even heart attack and stroke



One in two deaths is caused by heart disease. And people suffering from heart attack and stroke can be as young as 30 years.

So, how can we lower our risk?

By exercising on a regular basis (30 minutes per day on a minimum of 5 days per week), reducing our stress level and by taking steps towards a healthy diet. This means to cut down on the fatty and sugary stuff and to introduce the following heart healthy foods into your diet.

Remember, it's never too late to start to live a healthier life whether as prevention or whether you're already suffering from high blood pressure, high cholesterol or had a heart attack or stroke.

Top 7 Foods For a Healthy Heart

- ♥ **Fruits and vegetables** – keep it colorful and aim for 5 portions per day. Eat broccoli, kale, tomatoes, peppers, apricots, grapes, etc
- ♥ **Whole grain, pulses and soya** – all highly powerful with lots of possibilities to prepare healthy meals
- ♥ **Apples and oats** – rich in B-Glucan which reduces bad cholesterol
- ♥ **Salmon and other oily fish** like mackerel, herring, sardines, tuna, – aim for 2-3 portions per week and get a good amount of omega 3s
- ♥ **Vegetable oils** contribute to the omega 3 intake and a better balanced

lipid profile: olive, rapeseed, walnut, flaxseed, soya oil

♥ **Nuts** e.g. walnuts, almonds – eat a small handful (25-30g) daily

♥ **Red wine and dark chocolate** – in small quantities like 1 small glass of red wine or 1 square of very dark chocolate per day – have been shown to be beneficial for heart health. But please, be careful! In this case it's not 'the more the merrier'! You wouldn't want to protect your heart but get liver problems or become overweight instead.

These seven foods provide you with a variety of nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, omega 3 fatty acids, phytonutrients, fiber and B-Glucan and prevent blood clotting, reduce 'bad' cholesterol, clean your arteries and fight free radicals.

But not only that: they keep your blood sugar level stable, boost your energy level, improve a low immune system, fill you up and are good for your mood, too.

So, next time you're looking for a 'quick fix' snack, instead of a bag of crisps or a chocolate bar, why not grab a banana or an apple and have some nuts with it?

Claudia Ehrlicher is a certified dietitian with a real passion for food, teaching and motivating people to lead a healthy life. She regularly contributes on Healthspan's Nutrition Expert and London Dietitian.