

WELLNESS MINUTE

February 2019



Heart
Health
and
Your Gut

YOU
CAN'T
BEAT
BEETS!

IS CARDIO
THE BEST
EXERCISE FOR
HEART HEALTH

ROASTED
SALMON WITH
ORANGE,
BEETS AND
CARROTS

HEART HEALTH AND YOUR GUT

"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." I'm sure you've heard this expression that implies that good cooking will win a man over. This may sound sexist in 2019 when gender roles are less rigid; however, this saying can be truer than you think.

Most people know that high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking increase your risk for heart disease. Did you know that your gut health is also an important factor?

The latest research shows that microbes that live in your gut are important, not only to heart health, but also to preventing diabetes, certain types of arthritis, bowel diseases, and more. In fact, the biggest trend in medical research right now is the microbiome, which refers to all the microbes that live in and on our bodies, including bacteria, viruses, and fungi. These "creatures" are known as the microbiota and they play a critically important role in our heart health.

One of the ways of assessing heart attack risk is by measuring hardening of the arteries. Yet, hardening of the arteries is not associated with other heart disease risk factors like smoking or high cholesterol. Instead, it is linked with inflammation. Interestingly, the microbes in our gut play an important role in preventing chronic diseases that are related to inflammation. The good news is that you have the ability to reduce inflammation. The foods you choose to eat can either increase or decrease it.

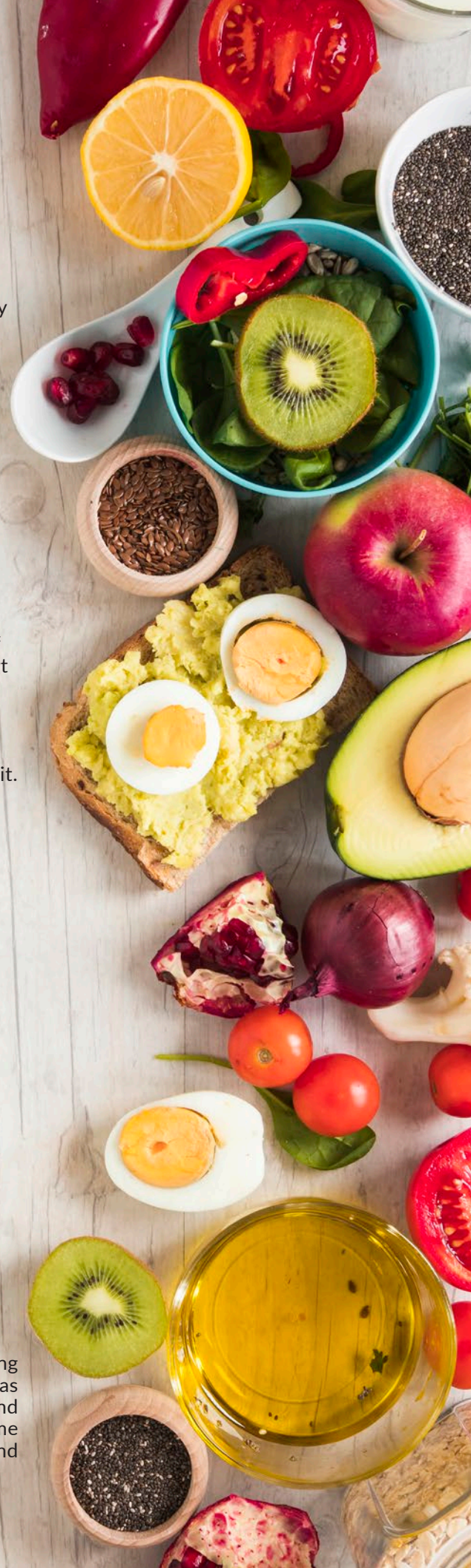
FOODS THAT INCREASE INFLAMMATION:

- Sugar in sweets, soda, and other sweetened drinks
- Refined carbohydrates, such as pastries, white bread, crackers, cereal, white rice, chips, etc.
- French fries and other fried foods
- Red meat and processed meats, like sausages and hot dogs
- Refined oils like margarine and shortening

INSTEAD OF THE FOODS ABOVE, IT'S BEST TO EAT LOTS OF WHOLE, NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS THAT ARE ANTI-INFLAMMATORY LIKE THESE:

- Green, leafy vegetables including spinach, kale, chard, collards, arugula, lettuce and others
- Fiber-rich foods like vegetables, fruits, legumes, and whole grains
- Fruits high in antioxidants, such as berries, apples, cherries, oranges, plums, and tomatoes
- Foods high in Omega-3 fatty acids like wild salmon, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, soybeans, hemp seeds, omega-3 enriched eggs, or take a fish oil or algal supplement
- Other healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, seeds, and avocado

Eating whole foods like these will help reduce inflammation by increasing the diversity of bacteria in your gut. In the past, we thought of microbes as unsanitary or something to minimize. Of course, there are good strains and bad strains, but what we know now is that a balanced and diverse microbiome is the key to good health. So, be good to the trillions of microbes living in and on your body so they will be good to you!



You Can't Beat Beets!

Do you include beets in your diet? If not, you may want to consider giving them a try. They have a very impressive nutrient profile, are super yummy, and can benefit heart and overall health!

HERE ARE 7 HEALTH BENEFITS OF BEETS:

- 1** Rich in nutrients, yet low in calories. A serving of cooked beets has just 44 calories, but contains the following nutrients: Protein, fiber, vitamin C, folate, vitamin B6, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, manganese, and iron.
- 2** They can help keep blood pressure in check. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke. Beets contain nitrates, which have a blood pressure lowering effect temporarily. Regular consumption may have long-term positive impacts on blood pressure.
- 3** May enhance athletic performance. Nitrates can improve the efficiency of mitochondria, the energy centers of your cells. Studies have shown that eating beets or drinking beet juice can improve athletic performance by increasing energy and oxygen when consumed 2-3 hours before training or competing.
- 4** May reduce inflammation. Some animal studies indicate that a substance in beets called betalains may reduce inflammation, which is the root cause of most chronic diseases, including heart disease. However, more research is needed to confirm this effect in humans.
- 5** May improve digestion. Beets are a good source of fiber, which is important for digestion and gut health.
- 6** May support brain health. As mentioned in #2, nitrates help with blood flow. This also increases the flow of blood to the brain, which may improve cognition and reduce the risk of dementia.
- 7** May have anti-cancer properties. The antioxidants in beets, as well as the anti-inflammatory properties may reduce the growth of cancer cells. More research is needed in this area too.

If you're not sure how to incorporate beets into your diet, this month's recipe offers a delicious and easy example. In addition to roasting, beets can also be steamed or pickled. They make a great addition to salads, can be blended into dips, added to smoothies, juiced, baked into chips, or grated raw.



IS CARDIO THE BEST EXERCISE FOR HEART HEALTH?

We tend to think of cardio as the best exercise for preventing heart disease. However, researchers at Johns Hopkins Medicine say that all three types of exercise play an important role.

CARDIO is short for cardiovascular exercise and is also known as aerobic exercise. Cardio certainly gets your heart pumping faster, which can help in lowering blood pressure, heart rate, and increasing overall cardiovascular fitness. Examples of cardio include running, brisk walking, swimming, cycling, playing tennis, dancing, and jumping rope.

RESISTANCE OR STRENGTH TRAINING has a more specific effect on body composition, meaning that it can reduce body fat and increase muscle mass. Having a lean body isn't just about vanity. A high percentage of body fat, including a big belly, increases the risk of heart disease. A waist circumference above 40 inches in men and above 35 inches in women is linked with increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. Examples of strength training include working out on machines or with free weights, using resistance bands, or doing exercises that use your body weight like squats, lunges, planks, etc.

STRETCHING and exercises that help with flexibility and balance are also important. Although they don't contribute directly to heart health, they benefit the musculoskeletal system, which allows you to stay free of joint pain and maintain stability. This is the foundation to be able to do the other types of exercise. In other words, a joint or muscle injury may prevent you from doing any exercise. Tai Chi and yoga are examples of stretching exercises, as well as basic stretches like a hamstring stretch, shoulder stretch, calf stretch and others.

Now that we know that we should do all three types, how much of each? Here are the guidelines:

- Cardio: Ideally, 30 minutes a day, 5 days per week or a total of 150 minutes per week
- Strength training: At least twice per week on two nonconsecutive days
- Stretching: Every day before and after other exercise

HOW MUCH ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING OF EACH?

Roasted Salmon with Oranges, Beets, and Carrots

This heart healthy recipe is super simple to make, yet elegant and delicious! Give it a try!

ingredients:

- 1.5 lb. salmon fillet
- 2-3 oranges cut into 8 wedges, preferably a combination of navel and blood red oranges
- 1 small red onion cut into thin wedges
- 1 medium-sized golden beet cut into thin round slices
- 1 medium-sized red beet cut into thin round slices
- 1-2 large carrots cut into thin slices
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon crushed fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon

Directions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F.

Pat fish dry with paper towels and place in the center of a rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

Arrange oranges, onions, beets and carrots around fish.

Combine oil, fennel seeds, salt, and pepper in a bowl then drizzle over fish and vegetable mixture.

Bake at 450 for 10-12 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Remove from oven and sprinkle with lemon juice and tarragon.



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HEAR from our MEMBERS

“The Wellness-Connect program is helping me to set my health goals and kind of remind me about my healthy habits of lifestyle. My main goals for the program were to get in shape and lose the weight. Many aspects of the program have helped me out. Like the best way to look at nutritional facts and eating habits. But it has mostly helped me with my exercises. I just want to say thanks to the Wellness-Connect Team for providing us with such an amazing program.”

Pajulullah H. | FLORIDA

“Before starting with Wellness-Connect I rarely did anything outside of the house. When I was home I just sat around watching TV. Once I started keeping track of my steps, I realized how lazy I was being. It was no wonder I was feeling sluggish and tired all the time, I was not taking care of myself. In a few short months, I have noticed huge changes in how I am feeling just by making use of the program. I get at least the 10,000 steps a day. I feel as if I have more energy to do things. I want to get the 10,000 Steps or more every day. Does it happen all the time? Oh no, but I cannot let that get me down. If I miss the 10,000 I aim to make up the steps the next day. Wellness-Connect has also helped me realize how bad the food was that I was putting in my body. Instead of eating a huge meal that was really bad for me once a day, I am now eating three good meals a day. I do have a bad day occasionally, but It is nowhere near how bad I used to be with eating. I enjoy the foods I am eating now because I know that they are helping me take care of my body. Wellness-Connect has also helped me go to get checkups from the doctor. I used to never want to go to the doctor because I thought if I felt fine, I was fine. Now I know that is not the case. With Wellness-Connect, I am taking way better care of myself and I could not be happier.”

Kori C. | OKLAHOMA