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The Heart Health Benefits of Strawberries

POSTED: Tuesday, January 15, 2008

Strawberries are not only delicious and nutrient-rich, new research from Harvard Medical School has found that they may offer heart disease protection. The new study found that those who reported eating the most strawberries experienced lower blood levels of C-reactive protein, a biomarker for inflammation in the blood vessels.



The Heart Health Benefits of Strawberries

Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health reported their findings in the August issue of the Journal of the American College of Nutrition. Using dietary intake records of approximately 27,000 of the women who participated in the decade-long Women's Health Study, lead researcher Dr. Sesso looked at levels of strawberry consumption and several risk factors for heart disease. The findings revealed that women who ate the most strawberries - two or more servings per week - compared to those who reported eating none in the past month, were 14 percent less likely to have elevated C-reactive protein levels - a blood biomarker that signals the presence of inflammation in the body.

Strawberry-Eaters Have a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle

Researchers found that those women who had higher strawberry intakes were also more likely to lead a heart-healthy lifestyle. On average, women in the highest strawberry intake group ate about twice as many servings of fruits and vegetables every day as did women in the lowest intake group. Not surprisingly, they had much higher average intakes of important heart-healthy nutrients like [fiber](#), [Vitamin C](#), [potassium](#) and [folate](#). They were also most likely to be non-smokers and get daily physical activity. In addition, the high strawberry consumers had slightly lower levels of both [total and LDL cholesterol](#), the so-called "bad" cholesterol.

The Bottom Line

Why eat red? Science suggests the pigments that make up the red color in many fruits and vegetables like strawberries, tart cherries, and [tomatoes](#) are powerful disease-fighting [antioxidants](#) that may help reduce inflammation associated with hardening of the arteries and reduce certain risk factors for heart disease.

1. Enjoy fresh strawberries, cherries and tomatoes when they are in season.
2. Use canned crushed tomatoes as pasta or pizza sauce.
3. Don't forget about dried fruits like dried cherries. Mix them with [whole grain breakfast cereal](#) and [nuts](#) to make a nutritious trail mix
4. Use frozen strawberries in your next dessert project

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