

WELLNESS MINUTE

February 2023



**THE GUT-HEART
CONNECTION**

5 ENERGY-BOOSTING FOODS

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

**IS CARDIO THE BEST EXERCISE
FOR HEART HEALTH?**

THE GUT-HEART CONNECTION



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 gut microbiome, which refers to all the microbes that live in your stomach and intestines, plays a critical role in your heart health.

One of the ways of assessing heart attack risk is by measuring the 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 your 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 with lifestyle and diet. The foods you choose to eat can either increase or decrease it.

FOODS THAT INCREASE INFLAMMATION:

- Sugar, which is not only in sweets and sweetened drinks, but is also added to many processed foods
- Refined carbohydrates, such as pastries, white bread, crackers, cereal, white rice, chips, etc.
- French fries and other fried foods
- Processed meats, like sausages and hot dogs
- Refined oils like margarine, shortening, and many vegetable and seed oils

INSTEAD, EAT PLENTY OF ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FOODS LIKE THESE:

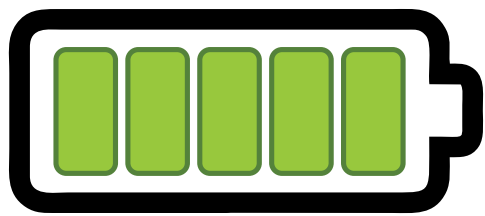
- Green, leafy vegetables including spinach, kale, chard, collards, arugula, lettuce, and others
- Fiber-rich foods like vegetables, fruits, legumes, and whole grains
- Fruits high in antioxidants, such as berries, apples, cherries, oranges, plums, and tomatoes
- Foods high in Omega-3 fatty acids like wild salmon, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, soybeans, hemp seeds, omega-3 enriched eggs, or take fish oil supplements
- 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. A balanced and diverse microbiome is the key to good health!

Sources:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/healthy-living/gut-health-bacteria-heart-disease-smoking-high-cholesterol-probiotic-food-a8352101.html>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/foods-that-fight-inflammation>



5 ENERGY BOOSTING FOODS

Are you struggling to stay focused and productive throughout your day? It's possible that the foods you eat are a factor. Sugar, refined carbs, and processed foods provide quick energy but zap your energy in the long run. Try shifting to foods that provide sustained energy.

HERE ARE FIVE ENERGY-BOOSTING FOODS:

1. **Bananas** – they're an excellent source of complex carbs, potassium, and vitamin B6.
2. **Fatty fish** – offers protein, healthy fats, and B vitamins.
3. **Brown rice** – unlike white rice which has been processed, brown rice retains more nutrients in the form of fiber and manganese, which helps to break down protein and carbohydrates and generate energy.
4. **Sweet potatoes** – the fiber and complex carbs allow your body to digest them at a slower pace giving you a steady stream of energy.
5. **Eggs** – they're a perfect breakfast food since they do not spike blood sugar and are a good source of protein and healthy fats. There is no need to avoid the yolk!!



Source:

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/energy-boosting-foods#section7>

Raspberry Chocolate Truffle Tart

Eating healthy doesn't mean you have to feel deprived of sweets. Here's a Valentine's Day treat that is vegan, gluten-free, and paleo.

Crust Ingredients:

- 1.5 cups almond flour
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¼ cup coconut oil, melted
- 1 tbsp. pure maple syrup
- Pinch of salt

Filling Ingredients:

- ½ cup canned full-fat coconut milk
- 6 oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- ¼ cup raspberry preserves, 100% fruit
- 2 cups fresh raspberries

Instructions:

1. Lightly grease a 9-inch pan with coconut oil (optional: use a tart pan with a removable bottom)
2. In a bowl, combine all of the ingredients for the crust and stir together. Press evenly into the prepared pan and set aside.
3. Place finely chopped chocolate in a large bowl. In a small saucepan, bring coconut milk just to a boil. Pour hot coconut milk over the chocolate and let stand one minute, then stir until smooth and creamy. Stir in raspberry preserves. Pour the filling into the prepared crust.
4. Garnish the top with raspberries.
5. Place the tart in the refrigerator to set and cool completely, about 1-2 hours. Slice and serve.
6. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Source:
<https://www.bakerita.com/no-bake-raspberry-chocolate-tart-paleo-vegan-gf/>



IS CARDIO THE BEST EXERCISE FOR HEART HEALTH?

We tend to think of cardio as the best exercise for preventing heart disease. However, all three types of exercise play an important role.

1. Cardio or aerobic exercise gets your heart pumping faster, which can lower blood pressure and heart rate and increase overall cardiovascular fitness. Examples of cardio include running, brisk walking, swimming, cycling, playing tennis, dancing, and jumping rope.

2. Resistance or strength training has a more specific effect on body composition, meaning that it can reduce body fat and increase muscle mass. A high percentage of body fat, especially belly fat, increases the risk of heart disease. A waist circumference above 40 inches in men and above 35 inches in women is linked with an 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 body-weight exercises like squats, lunges, planks, etc.

3. 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 what allows you 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 you know the importance of all three types, here are the guidelines for how much of each:

- 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 exercises

https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy_heart/move_more/three-kinds-of-exercise-that-boost-heart-health

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