

Apples rank among Harvard's top cholesterol-lowering foods



According to the Harvard Medical School, apples are one of the top 11 foods that can help lower one's cholesterol. This news was announced in late 2009 when Harvard released a set of recommendations surrounding cholesterol.

Apples ranked 7th out of 11 different foods that help lower LDL, or bad cholesterol levels. The fruit's high soluble fiber content is believed to bind cholesterol and its precursors in the digestive system and eliminate them from the body before they can circulate.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that naturally occurs in the body. Some cholesterol is needed in order for the body to function properly. However, too much cholesterol left in the blood stream can lead to plaque formation, which clogs arteries and can cause heart problems.

Top 11 Cholesterol Fighting Foods

1. Oats
2. Barley/Whole Grains
3. Beans
4. Eggplant and Okra
5. Nuts
6. Vegetable Oils
7. Apples, grapes, strawberries and citrus fruits
8. Foods fortified with sterols and stanols
9. Soy
10. Fatty fish
11. Fiber supplements

Source: Harvard Medical School, October 2009

Other research indicates that the high concentration of antioxidants found in apples also plays a role in lowering cholesterol. A 2005 study at the University of California-Davis found that consuming two apples daily reduced LDL levels in both men and women.

In addition to increasing intake of cholesterol-fighting foods, regular cardiovascular exercise is a great way to lower cholesterol levels.

Source:

US Apple. 'An Apple a Day Newsletter.' Fall 2009.

Cancer.gov. <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/lung>

10 easy tips that can help relieve chronic muscle pain

It is estimated that 2 percent of the U.S. population suffers from fibromyalgia, a chronic condition known for causing intense pain and fatigue throughout the body's muscular system. Though the number of cases are small when compared to other health issues, fibromyalgia is a difficult condition to treat. In fact, medication tends to only reduce symptoms between 30-50 percent of the time and some foods can even aggravate symptoms.

So, what's a fibromyalgia patient to do? According to Health.com, there are several diet tips that patients can implement to help relieve pain. Although few studies have been done on fibromyalgia and the diet, experts believe that the following tips can't hurt - and may even help - people deal with fibromyalgia pain.

1. Focus on Fresh Foods: In addition to dealing with muscle and joint pain, many fibromyalgia patients have food sensitivities. Focusing on fresh foods (which don't contain preservatives or additives) may ease symptoms.

2. Limit Caffeine Intake: Experts believe that fibromyalgia is linked to an imbalance of brain chemicals that control mood. Symptoms also include restless sleep and fatigue. While a cup of joe may provide an initial boost of energy, it shouldn't be a substitute for sleep and may even keep you awake at night.

3. Avoid Nightshade Variety Vegetables: Though veggies are great to include in every diet, the nightshade variety (tomatoes, potatoes and eggplant) are believed to trigger joint pain. Cutting these out may be very beneficial for fibromyalgia patients.

4. Load up on Omega-3s: A 2006 survey of arthritis patients found that daily fish oil supplements reduced pain symptoms in 60 percent of patients. Because pain is associated with fibromyalgia, eating salmon and other Omega-3 rich fish may be a great idea.

5. Use Yeast Sparingly: Both yeast and gluten (sensitive foods for many fibromyalgia patients) are found in a variety of baked goods. Consuming yeast may contribute to the growth of yeast fungus in the body, which then leads to pain. Best advice - use it sparingly!

6. Limit Dairy Intake: Lactose intolerance affects many adults, including fibromyalgia patients. Limiting the amount of dairy in the diet may be a great way to improve digestion and pain symptoms.

7. Eat Fewer Carbs: Nearly 90 percent of fibromyalgia patients have low adrenal functioning, which impacts the metabolism of carbohydrates and can lead to hypoglycemia. Sugar crashes are common and keeping sugar levels stable is a must.

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8. Limit consumption of aspartame: This is the artificial sweetener found in diet pop and many sugar-free snacks. The chemical activates neurons that can increase sensitivity to pain. Since fibromyalgia patients are already sensitive to pain, laying off aspartame is recommended.

9. Avoid Food Additives: MSG (a high-sodium flavor enhancer often added to fast food and processed packaged goods) is an excitatory neurotransmitter that may stimulate pain receptors. A 2007 animal study also suggested that increases in MSG in muscles may contribute to pain sensitivity.

10. Stay Away from Junk Food: According to the National Fibromyalgia Research Association, it is best to limit or even eliminate refined sugar, caffeine, alcohol,

and fried or highly processed foods from the diet. The main reasons? These foods may irritate muscles, disrupt sleep and compromise the immune system in fibromyalgia patients. All in all, it is best to load up on fresh fruits, vegetables, and other good-for-you foods in order to keep pain symptoms at bay!

For more information on fibromyalgia, including causes, symptoms and lifestyle tips, visit [MayoClinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com).

Sources:

1. *Health.com*. "The fibro-food connection." M. Betsch. <http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20309924,00.html>

2. *Mayo Clinic*. "Fibromyalgia." <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fibromyalgia/DS00079>

Snack time? Include fresh fruit with these easy snack ideas!

- Make your own smoothies by blending together frozen fruit, such as sliced peaches or blueberries, and milk and/or 100% fruit juice.
- Dip your choice of cut-up fruit with yogurt for a delicious mid-morning snack. Keep things simple by using pre-packaged sliced apples, such as AppleSweets®.
- Keep dried fruit and nuts in your desk or file drawer for quick and easy mid-morning or mid-afternoon snacks.
- Try the new mixed fruit medley by combining fruits with different flavors, such as cherries with apples or blueberries with pears.
- We've all heard that apples and peanut butter make a great snack, but what about apples and cheddar cheese? Keep apple snacks interesting by mixing up what other item you combine them with.
- If all else fails, eat a whole apple or pear for a snack. These nutritious fruits have flavors that are great all on their own!

Baked Pears with Raisins

With only 129 calories per serving, this scrumptious dessert won't leave you feeling guilty after eating it. Plus, it's a great way to get kids to eat fruit.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup raisins
4 large ripe pears
2 TBSP brown sugar
1 TSP cinnamon
2 TBSP cold butter



Nutrition Information per serving:

129 calories, 2 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 4 mg cholesterol, 19 mg sodium, 30 g carbohydrates, 4 g dietary fiber, 21 g sugars, 1 g protein

PROCEDURE

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Soak raisins in hot water while preparing the rest of the recipe. Next, carefully peel the pears. Be sure to maintain the fruit's unique shape. (Potato peelers work well for this). Then, cut the pears in half lengthwise and place core-side up in a 13 x 9 baking dish. Using a melon baller (or large spoon), scoop out the cores from the pear halves and discard. Mix brown sugar and cinnamon together in a small bowl, and sprinkle equally over the pear halves. Chop the butter into tiny pieces and place an equal amount over all eight of the pear halves. Drain the water from the raisins, and sprinkle raisins evenly over the pears. Pour just enough water in the bottom of the baking dish to cover the bottom. Bake the pears until just tender; about 30-40 minutes. Serve warm and enjoy!

Piñata Apple Risotto

This dish may be small in size, but it's rich with flavor thanks to the oh-so-delicious Pinata apple. Add seared scallops to make it a complete meal. Recipe courtesy of Chef Jason Wilson of CRUSH in Seattle, WA.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup of carnaroli rice
4 cups Pinata apple juice
1 cup diced Pinata apples
2 tbsp. diced shallots
½ cup Mascarpone cheese
1 cup chicken stock
¼ cup diced bacon
2 tbsp. chopped chives
1 tbsp. chopped sage
3 tbsp. Kosher salt
4 oz. butter



PROCEDURE

In a stainless steel sauce pan, saute the bacon on medium heat until crisp and brown. Remove bacon but leave the fat for the next step. In the same pan, saute the shallots for two minutes on medium heat, add the carnaroli rice and butter and stir continuously until rice no longer clumps and is lightly toasted. Add ½ cup chicken stock and stir. When stock is fairly evaporated, add remaining cup. Once the second ½ cup of stock is evaporated, increase the heat to medium high and add the salt, apples and 2 cups of apple juice. Stir vigorously. As rice begins to become creamy, add the mascarpone and remaining juice, stir vigorously and finish with the herbs and bacon before serving. Enjoy!