

HealthBits

La Crosse County Health Department Nutrition Division February 10th, 2006

February is heart month

♥ A healthy heart is within everyone's reach! You already know some of the basics of heart health...eat less fat...eat lots of fruits and vegetables...keep your blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check....But here are some additional ways to keep your ticker ticking!

Don't Skip Breakfast—Experts note that most heart attacks happen between 7 a.m. & noon—possibly because the cells that help the blood to clot (platelets) are stickiest then. Eating breakfast seems to make the platelets less sticky & less likely to clump together to block a vital artery.

Go nuts—Studies suggest that eating 1.5 ounces/day of either walnuts or almonds has a protective effect on one's heart. Both are good sources of healthy fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) and are known for their positive effect on blood lipids. Almonds have been found to reduce the “bad” cholesterol (LDLs) and walnuts are great sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Meet the Bs—Antioxidants such as vitamins C, E and beta-carotene have often been touted for heart health because they appear to slow the formation of plaque in arteries. Evidence now suggests that folic acid, a B vitamin, along with B₆ & B₁₂ may help prevent heart attacks. So eat your whole grains for B₆ & folic acid, your green leafy veggies, broccoli & whole grain cereals for folic acid & protein foods such as meat, eggs, fish & dairy to get your B₁₂



Did you know... Quitting smoking doesn't just improve breathing & lung function, it also cuts your risk of heart attack by 50-70% within 5 years of quitting!

Chocolates for Your Valentine

Thinking of buying chocolates for your valentine this year?

You'll win their heart in more ways than one! Researchers have found that epicatechin, a substance found in chocolate, can improve cardiovascular health by improving blood flow & thus circulation. So enjoy a few chocolates from your sweetie!



Heart Healthy Recipe Corner

Orange, Avocado & Radish Salad



Citrus Dressing

1 teaspoon salt
3 Tablespoons lemon juice
1 Tablespoon orange juice
1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ cup olive oil
¼ cup toasted almond slivers

Salad

6 cups chopped romaine lettuce
2 navel oranges
1 medium avocado, peeled & pitted
1 cup sliced red radishes
1 clove garlic crushed or finely minced

1. To make the dressing combine all the ingredients except the garlic in a jar with a lid. Shake well until mixed. Set aside
2. To toast the almonds: Place in a single layer on a microwave proof plate. Microwave on high in 30 second increments, stirring occasionally until almonds are lightly browned. Set aside
3. Arrange lettuce pieces on a flat serving platter.
4. Peel & slice oranges in half lengthwise then cut into ¼ inch thick slices. Set aside.
5. Cut the avocado in half lengthwise. Twist the 2 halves to separate them & remove the pit. Peel avocado & cut into ¼ inch slices.
6. Arrange the orange & avocado slices alternately over the lettuce. Scatter the radishes over top & then the toasted almonds.
7. When ready to serve, add garlic to dressing & pour it over top of the lettuce. Serves 8



Interesting web sites

www.cookinglight.com Cooking Light's web site. It has everything from food & recipe ideas, menu planning tips for those days where you can't think of what to make, cooking basics in their cooking 101 area & great tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle in the Healthy Life section. A great web site that is

loaded with good ideas & well tested recipes.

Questions...Questions...Questions...Questions...Questions...

Nutrition division staff frequently get health & diet questions from Health Bits readers. Because we think the questions are great & that many employees may be interested we'll be printing some of your questions & our responses in upcoming issues of the newsletter. Below is one we received recently regarding green tea.



Question: Is decaffeinated green tea good for you?

Answer: Health benefits from green tea have been studied in both human & animal trials. Green tea is among the richest natural sources of antioxidants (including polyphenols and flavonoids) which have been linked with cancer prevention, decreased risk of stroke and lowering blood cholesterol. Green tea has also been associated with fighting cavities, slowing down potentially harmful blood clotting & acting as an anti-inflammatory agent in arthritis.

Most of the published health research on green tea has been in regard to preventing diseases—such as cancer prevention. One class of flavonoids, called catechins (which are abundant in green tea) have recently been in the spotlight for their anti-cancer potential.

The decaffeination process can affect the amount of antioxidants in green tea. Tea can be decaffeinated using one of two methods—water or solvent extraction. Water extraction retains about 95% of the original antioxidants while solvent extraction retains only about 30%. Check the product label to determine which method has been used on your favorite green tea.

The study of antioxidants is relatively young—so look for continuing research in this exciting area of disease prevention.

Have questions about what you've read in our newsletter? Contact Linda Lee at lee.linda@co.la-crosse.wi.us.