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**Clinic Hours: Monday-Thursday 9:00 am- 12:00 pm & 2:00 pm- 6:00 pm Friday 8:30 am- 12:00 pm
Friday 1:00 pm- 5:00 pm & Saturday 8:00 am-11:00am
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Five Super Foods for Your Heart

Every heart-healthy diet should include these foods.

Food for the Heart: Blueberries

This "powerhouse" tops the list. Blueberries are not only delicious but are also rich in antioxidants.

According to the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council, researchers believe that the antioxidants in blueberries work to reduce the buildup of "bad" LDL cholesterol in artery walls that contributes to cardiovascular disease and stroke. Studies conducted at the USDA Human Nutrition Center have found that blueberries rank No. 1 in antioxidant activity when compared with 40 other fresh fruits and vegetables. Antioxidants help neutralize harmful byproducts of metabolism called free radicals that can lead to cancer and other age-related diseases. Anthocyanin, the antioxidant that is thought to be responsible for this major health benefit, can also be found in blackberries, black raspberries, black currants, and red grapes.

A 1 cup serving of blueberries a day is recommended. Fresh, frozen, or dried, they can be added to cereal, muffins, or eaten by themselves.

Food for the Heart: Salmon

Salmon is widely available, affordable, fast, and easy. It's also one of the best sources of a "healthy fat" called omega-3 fatty acids.

Oily fish such as salmon (as well as mackerel, herring, and sardines) contain omega-3s. This fat is believed to reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease by lowering the levels of triglycerides in the body -- blood fats linked to heart disease and diabetes.

Research has also found that omega-3 fatty acids prevent blood clots by making platelets less likely to clump together and stick to artery walls.

Blood vessels are also less likely to constrict, making the heart less vulnerable to life-threatening irregular heart rates.

The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish (especially oily fish like salmon) at least twice a week; a serving is between 3 oz and 6 oz.

Food for the Heart: Soy Protein

Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, protein, vitamins, and minerals, soy protein is a good alternative for red meat; it's also lower in fat and higher in fiber than many meat choices.

In people with high cholesterol, studies show that soy protein, when eaten with a healthy low-fat diet, lowers cholesterol. In fact, researchers found that people who ate a diet of several cholesterol-fighting foods lowered their cholesterol as much as people who took medicine.

Both the FDA and the American Heart Association encourage eating at least 1 oz (28 grams) of soy protein daily. You can get your soy from soybeans, soy nuts, soy milk, soy flour, energy bars, fortified cereal, tempeh, and tofu.

Food for the Heart: Oatmeal

Grandma may have known what she was doing when she served up her piping hot bowl of oatmeal every morning. A half-cup daily serving of oatmeal contains only about 130 calories while delivering 5 grams of heart-healthy fiber that helps to lower cholesterol and keep body weight to a healthy level.

Another benefit of oatmeal is that it will fill you up and likely keep you filled until lunchtime, so you're not tempted by unhealthy snacks.

Oatmeal and other whole grains such as whole wheat, barley, rye, millet, quinoa, brown rice, and wild rice also help reduce the risk of diabetes, which in itself is a risk factor for heart disease.

It's important to use whole grains, not refined grains so you get the "whole package." Refined or processed grains lose their nutrients and fiber.

You can get your whole grains in other forms besides oatmeal, including whole grain breads and pastas.

The daily recommendation for fiber intake is between 21 and 38 grams, depending on your sex and age, according to the American Dietetic Association.

Food for the Heart: Spinach

This dark green, leafy vegetable (and its cousins such as kale, Swiss chard, broccoli, and collard greens) is high in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that may protect against cardiovascular disease; it's also a source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Spinach is also rich in folate. Folate helps reduce the blood levels of the amino acid homocysteine. An emerging risk factor for developing cardiovascular disease is a high level of homocysteine. It is recommended you eat a cup a day of your favorite dark green, leafy vegetable.