

*Can eating berries protect against heart disease?*

Berries contain a variety of beneficial nutrients including phytochemicals, vitamin C, folate, potassium, and soluble fiber. As a result, researchers recently hypothesized that consumption of these fruits may positively affect markers for cardiovascular disease such as blood pressure and cholesterol (1). In this investigation, men and women at risk of developing cardiovascular disease were asked to consume approximately 1 1/2 cups of berries daily (alternating between whole bilberries with lingonberry nectar and black currant or strawberry puree with chokeberry/ raspberry juice) or a control treatment of equal calories for eight weeks. The results showed that berry consumption had a positive effect on platelet function, HDL cholesterol, and blood pressure. These findings suggest that consuming berries on a regular basis may promote heart health.

*Reference:*

1. Erlund I, Koli R, Alfthan G, Marniemi J, Puukka P, Mustonen P, Mattila P, Jula A. Favorable effects of berry consumption on platelet function, blood pressure, and HDL cholesterol. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2008; 87: 323-31