Why Beets Are Good for the Heart

Analysis By Dr. Joseph Mercola | Fact Checked

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Research presented to the British Cardiovascular Society showed how vitamins in beetroot juice could reduce beetroot inflammation in people with coronary heart disease
- Nitrate in a substrate in the body's production of nitric oxide, long known to be a potent vasodilator that promotes healthy blood flow for efficient oxygenation of your tissues and organs
- Nitrates improve brain neuroplasticity by participating in the expression of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), required for activation of BDNF receptors and improve muscle function, athletic performance and lung function
- Other foods with cardioprotective properties include cruciferous vegetables that may promote thinner (healthier) carotid walls, high-fiber, prebiotic-rich sauerkraut that reduces inflammation and blood pressure, and high magnesium, dark green leafy vegetables

Research funded by the British Heart Foundation and presented to the British Cardiovascular Society showed how beets may reduce harmful inflammation in people who have coronary heart disease.[1]

There's a lot to be said for this humble root. Archaeological evidence shows that beets were a part of the diet dating back to the Third Dynasty and Greek records show beets were cultivated around 300 BC.[2] Originally, it was the beet greens that were prized as food and not the fibrous roots.[3]

Ancient Romans, Greeks and Italians believed that beets were an aphrodisiac.[4] The roots were occasionally used for medicine but not consumed regularly until 1542. The plant is easy to grow and whether it's juiced, cooked, pickled or fermented, beets have a wide range of health benefits.

Although packed with nutrients, up to 8% of each beetroot is simple sugar, so people who struggle with insulin resistance should partake carefully. In 1747, a chemist discovered how to extract the sucrose from beets, leading to the development of the beet sugar industry, which uses fewer resources than sugarcane.[5]

Beetroot Juice May Protect Heart Health

Research presented at the British Cardiovascular Society conference in Manchester showed just one glass of beetroot juice each day could help reduce the harmful inflammation found in people who have coronary heart disease.[1]

According to the CDC,[6] heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the U.S. and coronary heart disease is the most common type, killing 382,850 people in 2019. About 20% of deaths from coronary artery disease occur in adults who are younger than 65 years.

The team engaged 114 healthy participants to test the theory that beetroot juice could help reduce inflammation in the endothelium and speed healing.[7] They split the group in two. One group of 78 participants received a typhoid vaccine. This temporarily increased blood vessel inflammation. The researchers triggered a localized inflammatory response on the skin in the last 24 participants.

Half of each group drank 140 milliliters (approximately 5 ounces) of beetroot juice each morning that was high in nitrate while the other half drank the same amount of beetroot juice without nitrates. The researchers tested blood, urine and saliva for biomarkers of nitric oxide and found those who drank the nitrate-rich beetroot juice had higher levels.

In the group that received the typhoid vaccine, the researchers noted the endothelium function was restored, which is best in the inflammatory response. They also found that those with bisters healed more quickly those who drank beet juice without nitrates. The researchers reported:[8]

> *"The researchers believe the increased levels of nitric oxide helped to speed up how quickly the volunteers were able to recover from inflammation by switching key immune cells from a state that promotes inflammation to a more anti-inflammatory state."*

Researchers from the Queen Mary University of London led the study. Dr. Asad Shabbir, clinical research fellow at the University, spoke with a reporter from The Guardian about the results.[9]

> *"Inflammation is vital to protect the body from injury and infection. However, in people with coronary heart disease persistent inflammation can exacerbate the furring of the arteries, making their condition worse and increasing their risk of a heart attack. Our research suggests that a daily glass of beetroot juice could be one way to get inorganic nitrate into our diet to help to interrupt harmful inflammation."*

Watermelon is another summer delicacy that can raise nitric oxide levels. However, watermelon is also high in net carbs and regularly consuming large amounts can likely worsen insulin resistance and increase your risk of heart disease.

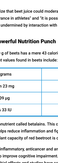
One study[10] followed men in their mid-40s to mid-50s for more than 12 years and found the carotenoid antioxidant that gives watermelon[11] its pink color — lycopene — reduced the risk of stroke in the group. Watermelon has a varied concentration of l-citrulline,[12] which is a precursor of l-arginine and a substrate for a nitric oxide synthase in the produce.[13] It also helps remove waste products and carbon dioxide.

Another study[14] showed that taking 2 grams of fresh garlic could increase plasma concentrations of nitric oxide. Nitric oxide has long been known as a potent vasodilator[15,16,17] that promotes healthy blood flow for efficient oxygenation of your tissues and organs. It also helps remove waste products and carbon dioxide.

By relaxing and dilating your blood vessels, nitric oxide improves blood flow and lowers blood pressure. In conventional medicine, nitrates are used to treat angina and congestive heart failure.[18] Research shows a daily glass of beetroot juice could lower blood pressure.[19]

Additionally, it improves your brain neuroplasticity by participating in the expression of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) and is required to activate BDNF receptors.[20] Beet juice increased tissue oxygenation, blood flow and brain neuroplasticity in a study[21] published in The Journals of Gerontology in a group of 26 middle-aged men and women diagnosed with high blood pressure.

Beets Improve Lung Efficiency and Athletic Performance



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Can't beat beets! I grow and can them every year to last all winter. You can also freeze them. Just blanche, slice and freeze.

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If it's sweet, best not to eat much or any, because it will probably cause a sugar spike, which will cause damage, fat gain, and lead to insulin resistance, or cause some other unexpected problem. Also, all plant foods contain anti-grazing toxins, anti-nutrients, and/or other effectively toxic compounds, including nasty Oxalates! Eating and drinking much beet doesn't actually look like a good idea, despite the alleged study results and benefits; there may well be variables which are not being considered, due to ignorance or selective blindness, similar to combinations of drugs being used to suppress symptoms of their harmful effects.

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Phytic acid and oxalates are found in seeds and nuts, leafy greens such as spinach and kale, and root vegetables such as beets and sweet potatoes, and can also be detrimental to your health because they act as digestive enzyme inhibitors. Mercola made a big announcement that he has changed his view on diet and is going more nose to tail, following his interviews with Paul Saladino, and avoiding vegetable and seed toxins. But he keeps contradicting himself, with continued promotion of toxin containing plants for health. I wonder if he even writes some of his articles.

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