

Strawberries, blueberries may cut heart attack risk in women

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Eating three or more servings of blueberries and strawberries per week may help women reduce their risk of a heart attack by as much as one-third, researchers reported in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*.

Blueberries and strawberries contain high levels of naturally occurring compounds called dietary flavonoids, also found in grapes and wine, blackberries, eggplant, and other [fruits and vegetables](#). A specific subclass of flavonoids, called [anthocyanins](#), may help dilate arteries, counter the buildup of plaque and provide other [cardiovascular benefits](#), according to the study.

"Blueberries and strawberries can easily be incorporated into what women eat every week," said Eric Rimm D.Sc., senior author and Associate Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, Mass. "This simple dietary change could have a significant impact on prevention efforts."

Blueberries and strawberries were part of this analysis simply because they are the most-eaten berries in the United States. Thus, it's possible that other foods could produce the same results, researchers said.

Scientists from the Harvard School of Public Health in the United States and the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom conducted a prospective study among 93,600 women ages 25 to 42 who were registered with the Nurses' [Health Study](#) II. The women completed

questionnaires about their diet every four years for 18 years.

During the study, 405 heart attacks occurred. Women who ate the most [blueberries](#) and strawberries had a 32-percent reduction in their risk of heart attack compared to women who ate the berries once a month or less – even in women who otherwise ate a diet rich in other fruits and vegetables.

"We have shown that even at an early age, eating more of these fruits may reduce risk of a heart attack later in life," said Aedín Cassidy, Ph.D., lead author and head of the Department of Nutrition at Norwich Medical School of the University of [East Anglia](#) in Norwich, United Kingdom.

The findings were independent of other risk factors, such as age, high blood pressure, family history of heart attack, body mass, exercise, smoking, caffeine or alcohol intake.

The [American Heart Association](#) supports eating berries as part of an overall balanced diet that also includes other fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products. Eating a variety of foods is the best way to get the right amounts of nutrients.

Provided by American Heart Association

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