

In Good Health

The good oil: the benefits of eating fish



Omega-3 fats are polyunsaturated fats which may assist in reducing the risk and severity of a number of diseases and disorders. Omega-3 occurs naturally in several plants and plant oils and in a variety of seafood.

The best seafood sources of Omega-3 fatty acids are oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel, gemfish and swordfish. In general, fish is also low in fat and high in protein, making it a nutritious dietary choice that can help:

- Reduce the risk of asthma developing in children;
- Contribute to the health of the brain and the retina;
- Reduce the risk of cardiovascular (heart) disease by reducing blood clots and inflammation, improving blood vessel elasticity, lowering blood pressure, lowering blood fats and increasing levels of 'good' cholesterol;
- Lower the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia;

- Lower incidences of depression;
- Help manage blood sugar levels in diabetics;
- Relieve symptoms of inflammatory conditions, including psoriasis, eczema, autoimmune disease, rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease; and
- Prevent the risk of delivering a premature baby.

Aim for two serves of oily fish per week but try to avoid fish high in mercury such as shark, swordfish (broadbill) and marlin, or only have one serve of this fish a week. Baking, poaching, steaming and grilling will allow you to get the most nutrients out of your fish without adding extra fat; and you should make sure to choose low salt tinned varieties.

Vegetarian/Vegan option: Flaxseed (also known as Linseed) is available as oil, seed and capsules and is a high source of Omega-3.

Remember: Aim for two serves of oily fish per week



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- Managing asthma
- Benefits of cycling
- Importance of hydration

Growing **your own veggies**



Health benefits of eating home grown

- Home grown veggies taste better, are fresher than those available in shops, and provide you a greater range and the option of using organic pesticides. You will know exactly what you are eating and how it has been grown.
- Vegetables are most nutritious when consumed fresh; grown yourself, you can eat them as soon as they are picked.
- Home grown foods are less likely to harbour salmonella, E. Coli and other nasty contaminants.
- All the bending, digging, raking, kneeling and picking involved in gardening can provide a good alternative to a gym workout.
- Many people find gardening in the fresh air and sunshine relaxing, and feel a sense of accomplishment and pride from growing their own veggies

Looking after your vegetables

Water vegetables every day or twice daily during hot, dry weather. Frequent watering washes away nutrients, so you will need to feed your plants on a fortnightly basis. A liquid or soluble fertiliser is easy to use and will be absorbed quickly. Using a good quality mulch will help prevent your plants from drying out, and will reduce the need to fertilise so often.

Sunshine is essential for healthy vegetables, so it is best to locate your garden where it will get about 6 hours

of full sun each day. If growing in shade, stick to leafy crops like lettuce and spinach, rather than trying to grow sun loving tomatoes and melons.

Healthy soil is the key to growing great tasting veggies. Use manure, mulch, compost, leaf mould and other organic matter to improve quality. Soil heavy in clay may need some added sand to improve drainage.

Mulch your vegetables at the start of summer to help prevent weeds, maintain important soil moisture and improve soil quality. You can make your own mulch with things like straw, hay, green waste, cardboard, compost and tree bark – just make sure there are no weeds or grass mixed in as these can germinate easily.

Water wisely by using a drip irrigation system. Drip irrigation provides water directly to where it is really needed: the root zone. Drip systems save water and can be used with a timer to ensure your vegetables are automatically watered every day.

Vegetables

The following vegetables are all easy to grow yourself and have many health benefits.

Beetroot: Beetroot's main benefits are that it contains no fat, very few calories and is a great source of fibre. Beetroot has for many years been used as a treatment for cancer in Europe, and it can also increase the uptake of oxygen by as much as 400 percent. Beet greens are rich in potassium to help maintain healthy blood pressure.

Chilli: Red chilli contains high amounts of vitamins C and A. Yellow and green chillies contain both of these vitamins in lesser amounts. Chillies are also a good source of most B vitamins, including vitamin B6. They are very high in potassium and high in magnesium and iron.

Carrot: The carrot gets its bright orange colour from β -carotene, which is metabolised into vitamin A in humans when bile salts are present in the intestines.

Garlic: Garlic has been used extensively in herbal medicine throughout the ages; it can be used raw to treat acne, and is believed to have some effect in lowering cholesterol levels. Garlic has a strong antioxidant effect and is a natural antibiotic which the body does not appear to build a resistance to. Garlic is most often used in preventing and reducing the severity of the symptoms of chest infections, common colds and flu's.

Onion: It has been claimed that onion is effective against conditions including colds, heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis; due to chemical compounds it contains which are believed to be anti-inflammatory, anticholesterol and antioxidant. However proof of these claims is still inconclusive.

Pumpkin: 100g of pumpkin contains approximately 40% of the recommended daily intake of vitamin A. It is also a good source of vitamin C and also contains vitamins B1, B2, B3, B5, B6 and E, folate, calcium, iron, magnesium,

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potassium and zinc. Pumpkin seeds are also high in nutrients, including protein, magnesium, manganese and zinc, and it is said the seeds can help lower cholesterol.

Spinach: Spinach is a good source of iron and calcium, with 100g of spinach containing approximately 22% of the recommended daily intake of iron. Spinach is also high in vitamin C, which improves iron absorption, vitamins A, K and E, calcium and folate.

Herbs

Most herbs like plenty of sunshine, good quality well-drained soil and occasional feeding. A liquid fertiliser works best. Water regularly but do not flood the plants. Herbs are generally tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions, and do just as well in pots as in gardens; the best time for planting is spring.

Herbs are often incorporated into a formal vegetable garden layout; however most herbs grow well in pots on a sunny balcony or patio that gets fresh air and sunshine. Herbs from Mediterranean areas, such as lavender and thyme, do best in terracotta pots while Asian herbs like Vietnamese mint like more water and so prefer plastic pots.

Picking herbs regularly for use will keep the plant bushy and promote strong growth, and in most cases will negate the need for pruning. Don't pick all the leaves at once though – always leave some on the plant to sustain future

growth. When using fresh herbs, cutting or scrunching them will bring out the flavour. You can dry herbs by spreading them out on a table in the shade or hanging them upside down in bunches in a dry, cool place.

Basil: Scientific studies have established that compounds in basil oil have potent antioxidant and therefore anti-aging, anti-cancer, anti-viral, and anti-microbial properties. It is traditionally used in India for treatment of stress, asthma and diabetes.

Parsley: Parsley is an excellent source of vitamins A, C and K, iron and folate.

Thyme: The essential oil component thymol in common thyme is an antiseptic which, before the advent of modern antibiotics, was used to medicate bandages. It has also been shown to be effective against the fungus that commonly infects toenails; and a tea made with thyme can be useful against coughs, chest infections and bronchitis.

Mint: Historically used to treat stomach ache and chest pains, mint is still commonly used in teas to help reduce stomach aches and pain, and to help with digestion. Thanks to its strong smell, mint can also be used as a mild decongestant to help alleviate symptoms of colds and flu's.



Companion planting

When grown together, some plants offer benefits to others by keeping bugs away, attracting pollinating birds and bees and providing good soil condition. Combinations that work well together are **basil** with tomatoes, asparagus and beans; **beans** with potatoes and corn; onions with turnips and carrots; **leeks** with celery; **lettuce** with carrots and onions; and **chives** with carrots, cucumbers and tomatoes.

Planting **garlic** with tomatoes will discourage red spider mites, and planting **garlic** around fruit trees will repel borers.

There are also some combinations to avoid, as they produce non-beneficial results: **apples** with potatoes, **parsley** with mint, **strawberries** with cabbage and **garlic** with beans.

Pesticides

The following recipe is an alternative to store bought chemical bug sprays; however you should still rinse vegetables and herbs well before eating. It is effective against aphids, thrips, grasshoppers and many other hewing insects.

Garlic & Chilli spray

1/2 cup hot chillies

1/2 cup onion, garlic, or both

2 cups water

Mix together and steep for 24 hours in a sealed container, preferably in a warm or sunny location. Strain and spray liquid onto foliage. You can also add soap flakes to help the mixture stick to leaves.

Cardiovascular disease



What is it?

Cardiovascular disease is a term used to describe a number of diseases and conditions of the heart and blood vessels. Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death in Australia.

The conditions covered under this term include:

- Coronary artery disease, which causes coronary heart disease and may lead to:
 - » Angina (intense chest pain)
 - » Heart attack (myocardial infarction)
 - » Congestive heart failure
- Cerebrovascular disease, a disease of the blood vessels supplying the brain that may cause:
 - » stroke
 - » transient ischaemic attack (a 'mini' stroke)
- Peripheral arterial disease, a disease of blood vessels supplying the arms and legs, which can lead to:
 - » Claudication - partially obstructed blood flow in arteries causing pain upon exercising
 - » Gangrene - death of tissues in legs due to insufficient blood flow
 - » Aneurysm (localised bulging or enlargement) in the aorta or other blood vessel
- Blood clotting and other heart or blood vessel diseases.

The most common cause of CVD is the gradual clogging of blood vessels by fatty or fibrous material. These fatty materials gradually build up in the walls of the blood vessel and narrow the arteries; this eventually prevents vital oxygen from reaching the cells. As the fatty deposits build up the arteries become less elastic. Any artery in the body can be affected, but most commonly it is the arteries leading to the heart, brain, kidneys, eyes and legs which are affected.

Risk factors

There are a number of factors which can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease:

- Tobacco smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Insufficient exercise, weight gain and obesity
- Family history of CVD
- Age - the older you are the greater the risk
- Race- risk is increased for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people from lower socioeconomic groups
- Sex - men are at greater risk than women
- Diabetes

Prevention

Some of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease can be reduced or removed altogether:

- Smoking can double your risk of heart attack or stroke, so quitting is the single most important thing you can do to lower the risk of CVD.
- Reduce your blood fats by eating a diet low in saturated fat. Maintain a moderate intake of polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oils and fats and load up on Omega-3 fatty acids.
- Control your blood pressure and have it checked regularly.
- Eat a variety of grains, fruit, vegetables and fish; and exercise for 30 minutes at least three times a week to help lower blood pressure, blood cholesterol and maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol intake to no more than two standard drinks per day, with at least two alcohol free days per week.



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