

# York County HEALTH & WELLNESS

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH - FEB/MARCH, 2017



## Protect your heart with easy add-ins

**W**hat's the biggest threat to our health? It isn't cancer or even accidents, but heart disease. According to the American Heart Association, one in four deaths in the U.S. is caused by heart disease, which includes heart attack and stroke. This statistic is scary, but the good news is, there is something powerful we can do to prevent us from becoming a victim to this disease.

Even if you are one of the 47 percent of Americans living with a major risk factor, there are preventive measures you can take for a healthier heart, says registered dietitian nutritionist, Dawn Jackson Blatner. All you have to do is embrace some simple lifestyle changes starting with your diet.

"Food is quite literally one of the best medicines out there when it comes to improving our health," says Blatner. "Studying shows repeatedly that a balanced diet including heart-healthy unsaturated fats, along with multiple servings of fruit and vegetables can give you additional protection against heart attack and stroke."

Here are five of Blatner's go-to foods you can easily incorporate into your diet for a daily dose of heart-healthy compounds.

**1. Fish:** Salmon and other fatty fish such as sardines are chock full of omega-3 fatty acids, which lower the risk of irregular heartbeat and help decrease plaque buildup in the arteries. If fish isn't already in your meal rotation, it's time to start. Preparation and cooking time for fish entrees is much shorter than that of chicken, beef and pork, making it a perfect weeknight meal.

**2. Greens:** Leafy greens contain nitrates, healthy compounds that not only reduce the risk of heart attack, but can boost survival rates after a heart attack. Plus, spinach, kale and other dark green vegetables have carotenoids, which work to keep blood vessels healthy. So aim to have at least one cup of leafy greens each day, such as scrambled in your morning eggs,

a green juice as a snack or a leafy salad with lunch or dinner.

**3. Nuts:** They contain protein, fiber and healthy fat, which work together to keep us feeling full and satisfied. Though high in fat, studies show people who consume nuts on a daily basis are leaner than those who don't, and staying lean is, of course, heart-healthy. So go ahead and keep almonds, walnuts or pistachios on hand for snacking, and choose those that are minimally processed, avoiding candied or highly salted nuts.

**4. Dark chocolate:** Good news: Eating dark chocolate every day can reduce heart attack and stroke for high-risk patients. The magic compound here is flavonoids, which are beneficial for blood pressure and clotting while also reducing inflammation. If you're on-board with making chocolate your after dinner indulgence, opt for brands with 60-70 percent cocoa and that don't contain milk fat in the ingredient list.

**5. Eggs:** Contrary to earlier belief, eating one egg a day has no negative effect on coronary health and can actually reduce the risk of stroke by 12 percent, according to a recent review of 30 years' worth of scientific study cited on [nutraingredients.com](http://nutraingredients.com). But all eggs are not created equal.

Some eggs, for example, offer the benefit of 25 percent less saturated fat, five times more Vitamin D, more than twice the omega-3s and three times more Vitamin B12 than ordinary eggs.

### Very Vegetable Frittata

#### Ingredients

- 4 eggs
- 1/3 cup egg whites
- 1 cup non-fat milk
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/3 cup finely chopped onion



- 1 cup chopped mushrooms
- 1 cup chopped broccoli
- 1 cup chopped cauliflower
- 1 cup chopped zucchini
- 1 cup halved cherry or pear tomatoes
- 1/3 cup crumbled feta cheese
- salt and pepper, to taste
- arugula, for serving (optional)

#### Directions

In a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs, egg whites, milk and Dijon mustard; set aside.

In a 10 to 12-inch ovenproof non-stick skillet, spray with cooking spray and heat to medium-high.

Saute onion until softened - about 2 minutes.

Add the mushroom, broccoli, cauliflower and zucchini to the skillet. Saute until slightly softened - another 3 to 4 minutes.

Whisk the egg mixture again, then pour over the vegetables.

Sprinkle tomatoes and feta cheese on top.

Place a lid on the skillet, reduce heat to medium and cook until the bottom and sides of the frittata are firm - 8 to 10 minutes.

Preheat the oven broiler.

Place the skillet under the broiler and broil until the frittata is cooked through (no longer jiggle) and slightly browned on top - about 5 minutes (watch closely).

Cut into 4 wedges and serve immediately, over a handful of arugula, if desired.

- Recipe courtesy of Eggland's Best.

## Make your diet a fruitful one

Anne-Marie Davee  
University of New England

**W**hat fits easily into a lunch box, tastes great, quenches your thirst, satisfies a sweet tooth and is low in calories? You guessed it — fruit. Mother Nature has cleverly combined carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins, minerals and, best of all, sweetness, into one colorful package. Fruit consumption is on the rise and now, more than ever, is recognized as a "fit" food.

Research studies verify that a daily intake of fruits and vegetables is associated with a reduced risk for chronic diseases, such as heart disease, and may have a protective effect against certain types of cancers. As a result, the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans, from 2015, recommend that we focus on fruit, particularly whole fruit. These guidelines encourage us to eat a variety of fruit whether fresh, frozen, canned or dried. And, the MyPlate graphic shows us that half of our plate should be fruits and/or vegetables.

Some may describe fruit as having "super powers" because they provide nutrients that are vital for optimal health and maintenance of our bodies. Vitamin C is needed daily for growth and repair of all body tissues, to heal cuts and wounds and to keep our immune system strong. This vitamin helps our bodies fight viruses, including colds and flu — particularly important during Maine's winters. Vitamin C keeps our teeth and gums healthy while also boosting iron and calcium absorption. Fruits that are high in vitamin C include citrus fruits (oranges, clementines, tangerines, grapefruit, lemons, limes) and strawberries, pineapple and kiwi. Vitamin A, or beta-carotene, is another nutrient found in fruit and helps our vision. It acts as an anti-oxidant and may reduce the risk for cataracts. Fruits such as apricots, cantaloupe, red or pink grapefruit, papaya and mango are high in vitamin A. Potassium is an essential mineral, and it is found in bananas, prunes, dried apricots, cantaloupe and honeydew melon. It plays a critical role in maintaining the body's fluid balance, in muscle relaxation and in controlling blood pressure.

Fruits are also high in a soluble fiber, called pectin. Pectin helps to lower blood cholesterol levels, assists in blood sugar control and makes you feel full longer. Fruits highest in this type fiber include apples, blackberries, raspberries and pears.

On the sweeter side, fruits are naturally higher in two simple sugars; glucose and fructose. These natural sugars can help satisfy that end of a meal craving for a sweet dessert, without a calorie overload. Fruits are low in

fat, low in sodium and relatively low in calories, so they can help maintain a healthy weight.

When shopping for fruits, think about the colors of the rainbow. Choose lots of different colors (red, orange, green and purple) to assure that you are getting a variety of nutrients that your body needs. Buying an assortment of fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits will assure that fruit is always available for you and your family. Use the nutrition facts on food labels to check the calories, nutrient content and sugar as you shop. Buy fresh fruits in-season when they are at peak flavor and low in cost.

The amount of fruit you need depends upon your age, sex and level of physical activity. Two cups of fruit per day are recommended for an average healthy adult consuming a 2,000 calorie diet. A serving of fruit is equal to 1 cup or 1/2 cup of dried fruit or an average size piece of fruit equivalent to a baseball. For more information, go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov).

Here are some tips to make your diet a more fruitful one:

- At breakfast, top your cereal with sliced bananas, blueberries, peaches or strawberries. Heat blueberries or strawberries and serve them over pancakes. Add fruit, such as applesauce, to muffins and cut the amount of sugar in half. Make a fruit parfait by layering low-fat plain yogurt with your favorite fruits. Create a smoothie by blending low-fat yogurt with frozen fruit.

- At lunch, pack an orange, banana or grapes to energize you through the afternoon. Add fruit to cottage cheese for a refreshing salad.

- At dinner, use fruit to tenderize meats and flavor entrees like chicken with apricots. Add fruit to salads like mandarin oranges on spinach salad and crushed pineapple with coleslaw. Try colorful fruit kabobs to add eye appeal to your barbecue. For dessert, try baked apples, poached pears or a fresh fruit salad.

- Keep a bowl of whole fruit on the table, counter or in the refrigerator for healthy eating on the run. Dried fruit makes great, grab n' go snacks, or spread apple slices with peanut butter.

March is National Nutrition Month, and this year's theme is "Put Your Best Fork Forward." Let's all put our forks into fruits. Fruits should be enjoyed as part of our daily diets — they are sweet and swell for you.

— Anne-Marie Davee, M.S., RDN, LD, a registered and licensed dietitian-nutritionist, is a nutrition faculty member at the University of New England. She also assists with coordination of the Maine SNAP-Ed Program.



## 9 unbeatable tips for healthy eating

Jen Small  
YMCA of Southern Maine

**BIDDEFORD** — Our diet is one of the most important to our health. So why do we have such a hard time eating healthy? I asked members of the YMCA (a health conscious bunch) if they struggled with this. Their overwhelming response — Yes! Here's what they told me:

- Time constraints: "I don't have time to plan or prepare healthy meals."
- Budget concerns: "It's too expensive to eat healthy."
- Knowledge: "I just don't know what's healthy anymore."

As someone who has struggled with obesity, I know how daunting "healthy eating" can seem. I also know that through small, incremental changes, eating healthier is possible — that's how I lost over 100 lbs, and how I've kept the weight off for years. The most important thing to remember — building and sustaining new habits takes time. Here are nine tips to help you succeed — start with one, or take on all nine. And, congratulations for investing in your health.

**1. PLAN YOUR MEALS:** Take a bit of time on the weekend to map out a plan for the week ahead. Knowing what you are going to eat and when takes the guess work out of mealtime, preventing last minute (and expensive) trips to the fast food drive-thru.

**2. COOK ONCE, EAT TWICE:** It is just as easy to cook six chicken breasts as it is two, so plan for leftovers to use for lunch or incorporated into a new dish the next night. Better yet, cook a whole chicken to use through the week and save money.

**3. "GRAB N' GO":** Chop and portion fruits, veggies, and nuts for the

week so you have plenty of healthy snacks ready to go.

### 4. LOAD UP ON VEGETABLES:

Eat plenty of plants — they're loaded with vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. Did you know that those who consume seven or more servings of vegetables each day have a 42 percent lower risk of dying from any cause? Try preparing veggies in new ways such as grilling, roasting, or steaming.

**5. EAT WHOLE FOODS:** Try to eat foods in their natural, unprocessed forms — think a whole orange instead of orange juice, or baked sweet potatoes instead of tater tots — they're more nutrient dense and lower in added sugar and saturated fats. Frozen veggies and fruit count — as long as they're in their whole forms — and they save money.

**6. DRINK WATER:** Skip diet drinks, fruit juices, and no-calorie drink mixes and opt for water instead. You "dress it up" with lemon, lime, orange, or cucumber slices, or even fresh herbs. And you can help the environment by using a refillable water bottle instead of buying bottled water, which will save you money!

**7. SLOW DOWN:** Eating lunch at your desk while rushing to meet a deadline, or munching in front of the television can lead to mindless eating and snacking. It takes time for your brain to get the signal that you're "satisfied." Slowing down just a bit to enjoy your food gives your brain time to catch up with your belly.

**8. EAT:** Many people think that eating healthy means restricting calories, but cutting calories too low will set you up for cravings and unhealthy food choices. Instead, aim for three meals and two snacks spread throughout the day to keep your blood sugar balanced and your cravings in check. Remember the advice above to eat lots

of veggies and whole foods. This will keep you full, satisfied, and nourished.

**9. INVOLVE THE FAMILY:** Often, people with families face a real challenge to establishing healthy eating habits by their resident "picky" eaters. Over the years, I've found that when children are involved in the process of getting food onto the table — meal planning, cooking, or setting the table — they tend to be less picky at meal time. Getting the family involved in making healthy meals together will help everyone make good choices.

This last point is so critical. As a nation, we have a childhood obesity crisis. One in five kids is now obese — a statistic that has tripled since the 1970s. The New England Journal of Medicine cites poor nutrition and lack of physical activity as the root causes of childhood obesity, and warned that our current generation of kids may have a shorter lifespan than their parents due to obesity. Our kids deserve better — instilling healthy habits as a family is crucial for their overall health and wellbeing.

At the YMCA of Southern Maine, we're on a mission to help people thrive. As part of this, we've made a commitment to educate all children in our Youth Development programs about healthy lifestyle habits. The program is called HEPA — Healthy Eating and Physical Activity — and it teaches children how to make healthy food choices and to enjoy physical activity. We can help kids with this by modeling these same healthy habits ourselves. Together, we can build healthier lives for ourselves, our children, and our community.

— Jen Small is the wellness instructor of the YMCA of Southern Maine. The YMCA of Southern Maine is a nonprofit organization committed to building strong children, individuals, families and communities through programs and services that promote a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all, regardless of ability to pay. To learn more, visit [ymcaofsouthernmaine.org](http://ymcaofsouthernmaine.org).