

Love your heart

We take a look at some of the best natural ways to protect the health of your heart

Each and every day our hearts pump around 100,000 times, transporting about 23,000 litres of blood around our bodies.

This vital process ensures that nutrients and oxygen are delivered to all the cells in the body, whilst carbon dioxide and other waste products are taken away.

According to the British Heart Foundation around 7 million people in the UK are living with cardiovascular disease. This includes all the diseases of the heart and circulation, such as coronary heart disease, angina, heart attack, congenital heart disease and stroke.

To reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease it is important to follow some heart-healthy habits. We spoke to the experts to get their tips.

EAT A BALANCED DIET

"A healthy diet is so important to prevent the risk of developing heart disease," explains dietitian Emer Delaney (www.myprivatediet.com). "This is because it can help reduce raised cholesterol levels and lower blood pressure: two key components of heart health. Meals should be based on wholegrain carbohydrates

such as wholegrain wheat, barley, wild rice, oats, quinoa and buckwheat as these will help to lower the risk of heart disease. A variety of vegetables and fruits will provide vitamins, minerals, fibre and antioxidants that will help protect the heart. This is why we should have at least five portions a day. Cooking from fresh and not adding salt to food will help to control raised blood pressure as will keeping active and maintaining a healthy weight."

KEEP ACTIVE

The charity Heart Research UK states that being active is "one of the most important ways of reducing the risk of heart disease,

helping to keep your blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check and keep your weight under control". The NHS recommends that, in order to stay healthy, adults aged between 19 and 64 should aim to do at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, such as cycling or fast walking, every week, as well as strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles. If you need some motivation, Heart UK is encouraging people to make a Healthy Heart Pledge to get fit and raise money by committing to a fundraising challenge. To find out more, visit www.heartresearch.org.uk/events

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Take some co-enzyme Q10

"Some foods such as liver, beef and sardines contain the vitamin-like substance co-enzyme Q10," says Dr David Mantle, medical adviser at Pharma Nord (www.pharmanord.co.uk). "However, most is produced within the body, with natural levels declining from as young as our mid-twenties. Q10 plays an important role in energy production and is particularly important for tissues with a high energy requirement, such as cardiac muscle. Patients with heart disorders such as heart failure have depleted levels of Q10. Remember that Q10 is fat-soluble, so take an oil-based capsule for best absorption."

