

# PRESSURE POINTS



March 2012

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE NEWS YOU CAN USE

## Protecting Your Heart with the Food You Eat



High blood pressure is one risk factor for developing heart disease. However, you can lower your risk of this disease by managing your blood pressure through diet, exercise and/or medication. To help protect your heart consider including the foods listed below in your diet. Studies have shown that eating these foods on a regular basis may help lower cholesterol levels and prevent heart disease.

### Fatty fish, flaxseed and walnuts

Fatty fish (like salmon and tuna), flaxseed and walnuts are all good sources of omega-3 fatty acids (an unsaturated fat). These fats have been shown to lower cholesterol levels and protect against heart disease. Salmon is great pan-fried in olive oil, baked or grilled and topped with a fruit salsa. Aim to have fish once or twice a week. If you don't like fish, talk to your doctor about taking a fish oil capsule once a day. You can find fish oil in pharmacies, health food stores and even in some grocery stores. Flaxseed can also be found in health food stores or in the all-natural section of a grocery store. Look for **ground** flaxseed because the body cannot digest whole flaxseeds. For a nutty flavor add ground flaxseed or chopped walnuts to yogurt, cereal (hot or cold), salads and to recipes like muffins.

### Olive oil

Olive oil is a monounsaturated fat (another type of unsaturated fat). Research shows people who eat a Mediterranean-style diet (which is high in olive oil) have lower rates of heart disease. Use **extra-virgin** olive oil (found in most grocery stores) in cooking and baking or mix it with vinegar to make a heart healthy salad dressing.

### Dark chocolate

The next time you reach for something sweet, choose a piece of dark chocolate. Dark chocolate is high in antioxidants (compounds that prevent inflammation) that may help lower blood pressure. Look for brands that are 50 to 70 percent dark.

### Soy

Soy, a type of bean that is high in plant compounds (called isoflavones), may also protect the heart. Tofu is made from soybeans and is a great source of protein and fiber. Add marinated tofu to salads or stir-fries as a healthy (and cheaper) alternative to meat. You can also add soy milk to your cereal or recipes instead of regular milk. Avoid highly processed soy products (like soy burgers or soy chicken patties) because they are a less natural form of soy with a lot of ingredients and preservatives.

### Plant sterols and stanols

Small amounts of plant sterols and stanols are found in many fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts. They help lower LDL cholesterol (otherwise known as "bad" cholesterol). Food companies have started adding them in larger amounts to their products. For example, you can find them in some trans-fat free margarines, orange juices and cereals. You may want to consider swapping butter for a sterol-fortified margarine.

Eating these foods on a regular basis along with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products will help lower your risk of developing high blood pressure and heart disease.

## Questions for Your Health Care Team

- What are some healthy fish choices besides salmon?
- How much chocolate can I eat per serving?

## It's Your Heart – Treat It Right

Join experts from the UMass Memorial Health Care Heart and Vascular Center of Excellence for three free community education programs focused on keeping your heart healthy!

For program topics and information, visit [www.umassmemorial.org/strength](http://www.umassmemorial.org/strength).

**Community Education Classes**

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## Getting Active ... One Step at a Time!

Walking is a safe, easy and inexpensive way to keep your blood pressure down and your heart strong. Some people like to walk with a pedometer, a small device clipped to your pants or belt that counts the number of steps you take. About 2,000 steps equals one mile. It can be worn all day or just when you exercise. You can also use a pedometer to set and track goals. For example, you could set a goal to increase the number of steps you take each day or week. Remember to keep your goals realistic based on your health and fitness level.



Pedometers vary in price and what they can track. Some pedometers track calories as well as steps. Avoid very low-priced pedometers as they tend to not work as well. You can find pedometers at Walmart, Target and most athletic stores.

Here are some recommended brands that cost about \$20 dollars:

- Omron HJ-112 Premium Pedometer (counts steps, distance and calories)
- Yamax Digi-Walker SW-200 Pedometer (counts steps only but is simple and easy to use)
- Timex T5E011 Pedometer (counts steps, distance and calories)

If you have a smart phone (such as an iPhone or Blackberry) you can download a pedometer application on your phone to count your steps, distance and calories. Prices vary and some apps are even free.

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## Recipes for Heart Health: *Grilled Salmon and Blueberry-Balsamic Sauce*

Courtesy of [www.eatbetteramerica.com](http://www.eatbetteramerica.com)

1 Serving (1 portion salmon plus 1/4 cup sauce)

4 (4-ounce) fresh or frozen skinless salmon fillets  
1 ½ cups Cascadian Farm® frozen organic blueberries  
(or any brand of blueberries)  
¼ cup finely chopped onion  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 teaspoon olive oil  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar or cider vinegar

1 tablespoon packed brown sugar  
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger  
½ teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel  
Nonstick cooking spray  
½ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon ground black pepper  
Snipped fresh chives (optional)



Thaw fish and blueberries if frozen. For sauce: In a small saucepan, cook and stir onion and garlic in hot oil about 3 minutes or until softened. Add blueberries, vinegar, brown sugar, ginger and lemon peel. Bring to boil and reduce heat. Simmer uncovered for about 15 minutes or until sauce has thickened and reduced to one cup.

Meanwhile, rinse salmon; pat dry with paper towels. Lightly coat salmon with nonstick cooking spray; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Measure the thickness of the salmon.

Place salmon on the rack of an uncovered grill directly over medium coals. Grill for four to six minutes per 1/2-inch thickness of fish or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork, turning once halfway through grilling. Or, place fish in an oven-safe dish and bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Serve blueberry sauce over salmon. If desired, sprinkle with chives.

**Nutritional information:** Per serving 310 calories, 17g fat, 60mg cholesterol, 24g protein, 14g carbohydrates, 140mg sodium

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### Center for the Advancement of Primary Care



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