6 Top Foods That Slowly Kill Your Heart

You may not even realize it, but chances are good that you eat at least one thing that's terrible for your heart on a daily basis.

The human machine was created to run at its best when fueled by optimal nutrients. Our ancestors lived this, but we've gotten so far away from the foods that they ate that they wouldn't even recognize ¾ of the foods on the shelf today.

One in FOUR deaths in the United States is caused by heart disease! Nearly every single case is caused by one of three things, or a combination of them; poor eating habits, lack of exercise, and chronic stress. Reducing all three of these reduces your chance of dying from heart disease to almost nil.

Many foods directly damage your heart while others create other health issues that will then affect your heart. For example, sugar isn't bad for your heart, but if eaten in large quantities, it causes obesity, which then damages your heart. Some of the foods that we'll discuss today may seem like no-brainers, but others will surprise you.

Trans Fats

Originally created as an alternative to that horrible, evil substance known as butter, (note sarcasm), trans fats have now been proven to increase bad (LDL) cholesterol while decreasing good (HDL) cholesterol.

There are several types of fats: trans fats, saturated fats, polyunsaturated fats and unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fats typically have the least impact on your cholesterol levels.

Your body needs fats in order to survive. For example, omega-3's found in olive oil, fatty fish, coconut oil, nuts and seeds is an essential nutrient that your body can't produce but still needs in order to preserve heart and brain health.

Typically, saturated fats (with the exception of coconut oil) should be consumed in limited quantities. Trans fats should be avoided altogether. No good comes from it.

Foods that you should avoid eating or stockpiling because of their trans-fat content include packaged baked goods and icings, packaged cookies, hot dogs, canola oil, margarine, processed fried foods, shortening, biscuit mixes, microwave popcorn, non-dairy creamer and "butter" crackers.

The upside here is that if you're canning whole foods and are attempting to stockpile foods and meats that you grow, you're avoiding trans fats without even realizing you're doing it.

Refined Grains

Foods such as white flour and instant rice have been refined to the point that all of the healthy ingredients that provide valuable vitamins and minerals have been removed. These foods have zero nutritional value, with the exception that some of them have vitamin D or calcium added back in.

Some foods in this category include white bread, bagels, pasta, flour tortillas, biscuits (yeah, it kinda hurts my southern heart to say that – pardon the pun) and pie crusts/pastry crusts. Instead, use products made with whole grains and switch to long-grain brown rice.

Like sugar, refined grains don't directly harm your heart but they don't provide any nutritional value. On the flip side, whole grains provide fiber that's known to reduce your risk of heart disease by keeping you fuller longer, which helps you control your weight. Fiber also helps lower cholesterol, which DOES directly decrease your risk of heart disease.

In other words, by replacing heart-healthy whole grains with processed ones, you're cutting a vital part of heart health from your diet. Make the switch back to the good stuff.

When stockpiling, any type of whole grain will store for years without losing hardly any nutritional value. One tip, though: once you grind it, you need to use it within a week, maybe two, because it goes rancid once you release the oils in the kernels.

Sugar

Yes, your body needs glucose to function; most metabolic functions depend on it for energy production. Strictly speaking, sugar isn't bad for your heart in normal quantities.

However, when you compare a lollipop, which is pure, refined sugar, to a peach, which contains natural, fibrous sugar, the nutritional values aren't even on the same planet.

Refined sugar has zero nutritional value. I don't care how many people say that candy gives you a nice energy pop to help you get through the day.

I contend that eating a piece of fruit will give you that same energy, but will provide it in a steady stream for a few hours because the fiber in the fruit slows the digestion of the food and thus the delivery of sugar to the blood stream.

Refined sugar has been shown to be actually physically addictive. People who are used to eating a lot of sugary products on a daily basis suffer side effects such as hard-to-resist cravings, fatigue, headaches and other symptoms until the body adapts to the lack of sugar. It's quite literally a drug.

When combined with trans fats, as is the case with candy bars, commercial ice cream, and baked goods, all you're getting is empty calories and fat that will make you fat, increase your odds of developing diabetes and other metabolic disorders.

These conditions all lead to heart disease.

From strictly a health standpoint there's no need to stockpile anything that has no nutritional value just so that you can meet your caloric input for the day. There are many other ways to get the sugar that your body needs without storing back junk food. For instance, instead of candy bars, stockpile healthy granola bars that you can make yourself at home with just your choices of fruits, nuts and honey.

If you buy canned fruit to stockpile, make sure that it's canned in fruit juice instead of syrup; juice is high in calories but it also provided nutrients such as vitamin C, unlike syrup that has no nutritional value whatsoever.

Fatty Meats

If you're a meat eater, and I am, then steak is delicious. However, fatty meats raise your cholesterol. This doesn't just apply to red meat; chicken skin and pork fat are bad for you too. The reason why is because it raises your bad cholesterol, which causes atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries. This, of course, causes heart disease.

When you're storing meat, especially if you're dehydrating it, you want it to be as lean as possible because fat goes rancid fairly quickly. You need to cut the fat, literally.

When canning your meat, trim the fat off and try to use leaner meats such as venison. When you can chicken, do so without the skin. Of course, it's fine to keep some of that fat so that you can make gravy, etc.

I'm not saying that you have to cut the fat completely out of your diet, but you should limit your consumption of the bad stuff. It will kill you slowly, but certainly.

Energy Drinks

This one is painful for me too, because I’m a huge fan. However, the mix of “proprietary blends” found in most of them contain such ingredients as taurine, caffeine, ginseng, B vitamins, guarana and sugar all work together to give you a quick energy boost but it also raises your blood pressure for a couple of hours after you drink them.

This may be fine occasionally as long as your heart and your blood pressure is healthy, but if you drink them chronically or if you have high blood pressure or heart disease, energy drinks can be harmful to your heart.

Salt

Salt is literally what keeps your blood volume up so that it can pump through your veins in a healthy manner. Stated very simply, it regulates your blood pressure. Too much salt, or if your body can’t regulate salt properly, and you’ll have high blood pressure.

Of course, if you already have high blood pressure caused by medications, atherosclerosis or other cardiovascular issues, you need to limit your salt intake.

Your body needs salt; it’s a mineral essential to your survival. However, you don’t need TOO MUCH salt. When you’re stockpiling, watch the levels of sodium in your foods. You can do this by canning or storing natural foods instead of processed, boxed foods.

Top Foods that Are Bad for Your Heart

OK, so in a nutshell, there are foods out there that you should avoid if you want to keep your heart healthy.

If you notice, these foods contain a combination of three or more of the ingredients that we just discussed. You don’t necessarily have to cut them completely out of your diet but eat them as a rare treats rather than as dietary staples.

- Pizza
- Doughnuts and pastries
- Baked sweets such as cakes and pies
- Fatty red meat
- Chicken skin
- Breaded foods
- Fried foods
- Ice cream and other frozen treats
- Pudding
- White bread
- Pasta
- Cream Sauces
- Sugary drinks
- Condiments such as mayonnaise, salad dressings and ketchup

Heart Healthy Substitutions

There’s no reason to sacrifice flavor in order to stay healthy. Instead of using creamy, processed salad dressings, use olive oil and vinegar, seasonings or lemon juice. Have a well-seasoned skinless chicken breast instead of country fried chicken. Have a filet instead of a ribeye or, if possible, eat venison or another lean red meat instead of beef.

Instead of a bowl of ice cream, have some fruit. Trust me, it WILL kill your sweet tooth. Instead of slathering your sandwich with mayo or ketchup, use mustard or oil and vinegar.

Your heart health will be critical in a survival situation. Not only will it help you if you need to run, maintaining a healthy heart now will keep you off medications that may not be available if SHTF. Plus, there’s the obvious benefit of living longer, and none of us will argue against that benefit!

If you have something to add to this list, please feel free to add it in the comments below.

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*This article has been written by **Theresa Crouse** for Survivopedia.*