



# SEND A VALENTINE FROM THE HEART

Most of us are celebrating Valentine's Day this month with heart-covered cards and boxes of chocolate shaped like hearts. But, did you know February is also Heart Health Month?

## A LITTLE CHOCOLATE CAN BE HEALTHY

The good news is some of that chocolate may be good for your heart! Dark chocolate contains substances, or compounds, known as flavonoids, or flavenols, and antioxidants. These compounds may help protect your heart and your cardiovascular system.

## BUT, WAIT A MINUTE BEFORE YOU EAT THE BOX!

Before you dive into that whole box of chocolate, wait! Chocolates like milk chocolate with marshmallows or caramel have too much sugar and bad fats to be healthy.

To find healthy chocolate, look for the labels that say the bar is 85 percent cocoa and stick to a small portion – just one ounce, or about a 1-inch square.

That's not much! Good thing there are a lot of other foods that promote heart health.

## CHOCOLATE FACTS:

Americans will purchase around 58 million pounds for Valentine's Day!

We spend about \$345 million to satisfy our Valentine's sweet tooth.

Over 36 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolate are sold every year for the holiday.

That's a lot of chocolate!

— source Nielsen



## YOU CAN GET THE SAME HEART-HEALTHY BENEFITS AND MORE FROM HEALTHY FOODS!

One ounce of dark chocolate isn't enough to keep your heart healthy. Your body needs a variety of healthy foods every day. You can find flavonoids and fiber and a lot more good stuff in other plant foods besides chocolate. We've listed a few favorites here along with a fun activity to share your heart healthy message with someone you love.

### act!v!ty:

Use the heart-healthy food ideas here or find your other favorites that are heart healthy and make a pun-filled Valentine's Day card starring your healthy food and coming "from the heart." You can share your Valentine with someone you are "nuts" about! Ready to "go bananas?!"

What you need:

1. A parent to help you research healthy foods online or at the library
2. Construction paper, pencils, crayons, paints, markers, glue and scissors to make your card
3. Glitter or decorations like lace or buttons for fun!

## HEALTHY FOOD IDEAS

### Peas

Legumes like peas, lentils and beans offer heart-healthy fiber and antioxidants

### Berries

Berries especially blueberries, raspberries and blackberries have flavonoids and antioxidants that promote heart health.

### Yams and Bananas

Both yams and bananas have potassium to help protect the heart and lower blood pressure.

### Nuts

Nuts like almonds, walnuts and cashews as well as avocados and olive oil offer heart-healthy GOOD fats to help lower cholesterol.

### Pears, Apples and Oats

Fiber that helps lower cholesterol is found in whole grains like oats and barley as well as fruits like apples and pears.

Sites to Use for Food Research:

World's Healthiest Foods  
Heart.org's Nutrition Center  
Web MD: 25 Heart Healthy Foods

# FOR PARENTS

## HEART HEALTH AND YOUR CHILD

Most of us think about heart issues as a worry for older adults. But a family history of heart disease plus factors like obesity and physical inactivity can put a child at risk for early onset heart disease. Further, findings show that the path to heart disease can begin in childhood.

A study quoted by the American Academy of Pediatrics found signs of arteriosclerosis in 7 percent of children between the ages of 10-15. For kids aged 15-20 that rate nearly doubled. The link between childhood health and heart disease led physicians to change their recommendation on cholesterol screenings for children.

Prior to 2011, pediatricians only recommended screenings for children with a family history of heart disease. Now, they recommend all children between nine and eleven should be screened.

There's no time like Heart Health Month to teach your kids healthy eating and exercise habits to prevent heart disease. We'd be nuts not to.

### **Next Month:**

March's Get Real Resolution explores food label madness. Kids get to explore the aisles of the supermarket and spot the difference between a marketing claim and the truth about the food in the box. Then, they get to be the food marketer and nutritionist to build their own healthy food label for an item from the produce section!



### JOIN THE GET REAL RESOLUTION!

Have you joined **The Cleaner Plate Club** and **Edible Kansas City** for the Get Real Resolution yet? Get monthly activities and fun food adventure ideas for a no-fight, all-fun way to help your whole family enjoy real food.

See more at:  
[cleanerplateclub.com](http://cleanerplateclub.com)  
or find The Cleaner Plate Club on Facebook.