



# Health Beat

The Official Wellness Newsletter of Plasterers Local 200

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Serving All of Southern California

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## 9 Foods to Never, Ever Eat If You're Trying to Lose Weight

If your New Year's resolution is to lose weight like many Americans promise themselves "This is my year!" Then you know that French fries, doughnuts, and piles of pasta are off-limits, but what about your morning smoothie or low-cal frozen dinner? These are the 'healthy' foods that shouldn't be on your slimdown menu.

### 1. GRANOLA

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, a half-cup of granola has anywhere between 200 and 300 calories, 12 to 16 grams of sugar, 3 to 15 grams of fat (depending on low-fat options), and nearly 40 grams of carbs. Plus, granola is usually mixed with something, like yogurt or fruit, which only increases its caloric value. 'Although you may think starting your day with a bowl of granola is the healthy thing to do, the calories can easily add up to over 600 calories, just at breakfast,' says Toby Amidor, MS, RD nutrition expert and author of the Greek Yogurt Kitchen. If you love Greek yogurt for breakfast, try some of these more diet-friendly topping options, but make sure your bowl isn't too big—which is a breakfast mistake that could be packing on the pounds.



### 2. FROZEN MEALS

Frozen meals are super-convenient. They're cheap, easy to throw in your bag as you're running out the door, and take just three minutes to cook. While your 300-calorie Lean Cuisine may seem like a waist-friendly option, it's not. Most frozen meals are loaded with sodium—as much as you should eat over a full day, not just in one meal—and lots of other syn-



thetic additives. Sodium packs on water weight, as the body needs to maintain a balance in the body, and when you're thirsty, you could reach for a sugary beverage, which adds hundreds of more calories. Salt also makes food taste better, prompting you to shovel more of it in your mouth. Another problem with frozen meals is they frequently lack sufficient fiber to keep you full, so you're likely to find yourself sneaking back into the kitchen shortly after you've eaten. If you must eat a frozen meal, consider adding a serving or two of frozen vegetables to boost the fiber and fullness quotient and dilute the sodium.

### 3. MOCKTAILS

Without alcohol, they're less fattening, right? Yes and no. It's true that alcohol adds calories, but so do the ingredients you're swapping in. Virgin margaritas, pina coladas, and daiquiris, are made with fruit juices and sometimes syrups, which have loads of calories and sugars. Instead, Amidor recommends sticking with alcohol—in 5 ounces of wine or a 12-ounce light beer.



### 4. PRE-MADE SMOOTHIES

Making a smoothie and ordering a smoothie at a shop are two very different things. When you make a smoothie yourself, you can measure the exact amount of fruit, swap water or almond milk for juice, and avoid any additional sweeteners. But many pre-made smoothies contain between 600 to 1,000 calo-



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ries, on average, and are loaded with sugar. 'An average height woman who is trying to lose weight is probably on a 1,200 to 1,400 calorie diet,' Amidor says, 'so consuming one smoothie with 1,000 calories can easily sabotage any weight loss efforts.'

### 5. STORE-BOUGHT BRAN MUFFINS

Bran muffins sound like a healthy breakfast option—with all that cholesterol-lowering oat bran, right? But the prepackaged ones found at the supermarket aren't nearly as fresh or healthy as they claim, and they're almost always oversized, packing in some 300 calories—about the same as a cream-filled doughnut! Many are also loaded with the saturated fats butter and oil, and contain upwards of 600 grams of sodium. Homemade is key when you're trying to lose weight, so why not try making your own? While baking definitely does take more time than going to the store, you'll reap the benefits of all your hard work spent in the kitchen.



### 6. VEGGIE CHIPS

If food contains the word 'veggie,' it's not automatically healthy. Don't let marketing gimmicks fool you: The majority of foods are mislabeled and not as healthy as they claim to be, veggie chips included. You're a lot better off eating fresh vegetables than synthetic and processed versions. You can always try making your own veggie chips by slicing veggies like kale, carrots, zucchini, and squash, really thin, misting them with olive oil, and then baking them in the oven.



### 7. ACAI

Acai had a major health food moment, thanks to the incredibly delicious acai bowl, which is basically a super thick acai berry smoothie mixed with nuts, oatmeal, and fresh fruit. But not only does acai cost a lot more than



other berries, it doesn't quite live up to all of its hype. 'Acai has been touted for many benefits, including aiding in weight loss, but there is no evidence that this berry will have you shedding pounds,' says Amidor.

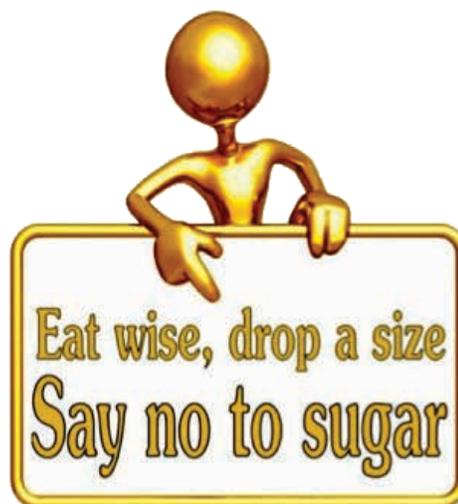
### 8. ALOE JUICE

Aloe juice aka aloe water has been touted as the new coconut water. The bulk of aloe juice is made with aloe vera gel, water, or tea, and then sweeteners and natural flavors may be added. While aloe vera juice supposedly has health benefits, like weight loss and anti-aging properties, none of these claims have ever been scientifically proven. 'Although aloe vera does contain high amounts of antioxidants, it has a slightly bitter, citrus-like flavor which is very difficult to drink on its own,' says Amidor. 'It also has diuretic properties, which if taken in large amounts, can lead to loss of potassium from your body, which is potentially dangerous.'



### 9. MICROWAVE POPCORN

Popcorn is a whole grain, so it's not unreasonable to include it on your green-light food list. However, even 'natural' and 'light' microwave popcorn is loaded with artificial ingredients, plus sodium and butter—and a ton of calories. This doesn't mean you have to give up all popcorn though, as air-popped popcorn is a much better alternative. It only contains 30 calories per cup and you can customize it to your liking.



# 15 Foods That Will Help Lower Your Cholesterol

## POMEGRANATE



Whether you're a seed person or prefer your pomegranates in juice-form, you're sure to reap the fruit's cholesterol-lowering powers: "Any form of pomegranate - whether the arils or

the juice - could help control cholesterol by slowing its build-up," says Amy Gorin, MS, RDN, New Jersey-based dietitian and owner of Amy Gorin Nutrition.

## CHICKPEAS



Chickpeas aren't just a solid source of protein - they're also a great option to eat if you need to lower your cholesterol. "One study found that eating pulses, like lentils and dried peas, daily significantly lowered bad 'LDL' cholesterol levels by about 5 percent," says Gorin. "One of my favorite

way to eat pulses is roasting chickpeas."

## PLUM



Grabbing a plum to snack on during the day is a sweet way to keep your cholesterol levels in check: The fruit contains anthocyanins - a.k.a. antioxidants - that help out your heart by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol. According to one study, eating three or more servings of anthocyanin-rich fruit each week can lower your heart attack risk by

34 percent.

## WHOLE-GRAIN CEREAL



If you skip breakfast, you might want to give the most important meal of the day another shot. Men & Women who eat a bowl of fib-

er-rich cereal every morning have lower levels of cholesterol than those who don't eat breakfast at all. It's all thanks to the fiber: "Fiber binds with cholesterol and speeds its excretion before it reaches your arteries," says Tanya Zuckerbrot, RD.

## OATS



Speaking of fiber, the same goes for oats: Eating a hefty bowl of oatmeal in the morning can help lower your cholesterol and keep you full and satisfied until lunch.

## KAMUT



When it comes to lowering your cholesterol, this ancient grain will become your new BFF. "In one study by Italian researchers, people regularly eating foods made with kamut saw their cholesterol levels decrease," Gorin says. "Serve kamut just as you would brown rice or quinoa, like with roasted salmon and steamed veggies."

## WHITE BEANS



Like chickpeas, white beans are also cholesterol-fighting superstars: The pulse is a master at lowering your levels, and you can enjoy it multiple different ways: "I love using white beans as a pizza topping," Gorin says.

## COCONUT



Eating coconut won't just make you feel like you got transported to a tropical paradise: It also has some major health benefits. One study showed eating the fruit is great at lowering cholesterol levels - even if

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you just top your salad with some crunchy flakes.

### TART CHERRIES



All cherries are delicious, but there's something extra special about this sour variety. "I love snacking on dried Montmorency tart cherries not only because they have a sour-sweet flavor, but because they also have fiber," Gorin says. "Plus, you get other heart-helping benefits, too. Anthocyanins, a type of antioxidant found in purple and dark red fruits and vegetables, may help decrease the risk of heart attack in women."

### GARLIC



Garlic is so easy to cook with that you have no excuse not to do so immediately. "I love adding garlic to stir-fries, grilled veggies like asparagus, and even using it to flavor olive oil," Gorin says. "Research shows the power herb could help reduce total cholesterol levels, so why not give it a try?"

### WILD BLUEBERRIES



with a lower risk of heart disease."

Another food with cholesterol-fighting fiber are wild blueberries. "Just one cup of frozen wild blueberries offers around 6 grams of fiber, which is about a quarter of your daily need," Gorin says. "They offer twice the antioxidants of regular blueberries - and eating a diet rich in antioxidants is linked

### CHIA SEEDS



Chia seeds got their superfood-status for many reasons, but one is that they're full of fiber. "The soluble fiber acts like a sponge,

soaking up cholesterol, while the insoluble fiber works like a broom, sweeping the intestines clean," says Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD.

### RED ONION



Onions might make you shed a tear or two, but the cry sesh is worth it: The veggie contains anthoxanthins that help lower blood pressure... and speed up your metabolism.

### WALNUTS



There's never been a better time to go nuts for nuts. "Many studies show us that regularly eating nuts can help lower our cholesterol - both total cholesterol and 'bad' LDL cholesterol," Gorin says. "Some research indicates that taking in 60 grams - about 2.1 ounces - of nuts daily yields the biggest benefits."

### BROCCOLI

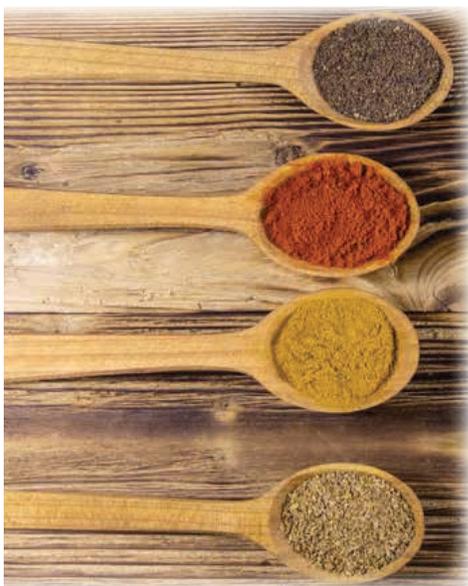


Adding some broccoli to your plate will do your body good. Since the veggie is packed with fiber, steaming a few cups for dinner or eating a handful as a snack will keep your cholesterol levels in check.



## These 5 spices have serious health benefits — here's how to cook with them

Besides taking any meal from bland to bold, adding spices to your winter dishes provide some serious health benefits too. Spices have a unique ability to add flavor and nutritional value (and even a feeling of warmth and comfort) to any meal, without adding calories or salt. Add one, or all, of these spices to your meals this winter for a nutritious and tasty addition.



### 1. Cayenne

This spice has quite the kick in flavor and in the health department. The compound, capsaicin, has been linked to lower blood pressure and could even provide relief from arthritis pain. Some research has found that it might aid in weight loss. It can be added to warm water with lemon, ginger and honey as an amazing winter immunity elixir. And you can always sprinkle it over winter vegetables, eggs, chicken or fish for some major flavor.

### 2. Cinnamon

This is always my go-to spice recommendation because of its versatility, warmth and potential health benefits. Cinnamaldehyde, the com-

pound found in cinnamon that gives it its flavor and smell is believed to have antimicrobial and antifungal properties in traditional Chinese medicine. Cinnamon also acts as an antioxidant, providing anti-inflammatory benefits. You can "sweeten" your coffee, winter smoothie, oatmeal, roasted root veggies and soup, with this delish spice instead of sugar.

### 3. Cardamom

Sometimes referred to as "the queen of spices" this ingredient can swing sweet or savory, and it's warm flavor pairs well with cinnamon to make the ideal winter duo. Beside the anti-inflammatory benefits from flavonoids, cardamom also contains a compound called cineole, which can act as an antiseptic and is promoted as a way to fight the bacteria that causes bad breath.

### 4. Ginger

Long known for its benefits like improving digestion and nausea and being a sniffle buster, most of us will benefit from sneaking a little bit of ginger into our daily diets. You can't go wrong in the cold winter months with carrot ginger squash soup, but even adding a couple of slices of fresh ginger to a mug of warm tea in the morning can potentially up your health game.

### 5. Turmeric

This yellow spice contains curcumin, which some research indicates is a powerful antioxidant and a way to fight inflammation in the body. Whether there are health benefits from the traditional medicine is unclear, but who doesn't love a delish warm beverage you can turn to on cold winter days? Get adventurous and swap an afternoon coffee for a turmeric latte. Or, revamp any go-to recipe by adding a dash. Have a curry you swear by? Don't be afraid to add a sprinkle. Yellow looks good on you!

## HERE'S WHAT REALLY HAPPENS TO YOUR BODY WHEN YOU USE ENERGY DRINKS

### ARE ENERGY DRINKS SAFE?



Before you pop open another can of Red Bull, you should know the not-so-innocent effects energy drinks can have on your body.

In spite of the known dangers of energy drinks, the market for them is booming. In 2016, research from Mintel revealed that more energy drink products were launched globally in 2015 than in any year since 2008, with the number growing 29 percent between 2010 and 2015. In 2015, an incredible 8.8 billion liters were sold across the world, with the U.S. taking the largest slice of that market with volume sales of 3.3 billion lit-

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ers. This is great news for energy drink manufacturers, but what are consumers really getting when they buy these drinks? Most of the major brands—such as Red Bull, Monster Energy, Rockstar Energy Drink, and NOS Energy Drink—have the same ingredients. We asked experts to reveal exactly what their ingredients do to our bodies.

## **ENERGY DRINKS CAN CAUSE DEHYDRATION**

The main source of energy in most energy products is caffeine. According to Caffeine Informer, Monster Energy, Rockstar Energy, and NOS Energy all have 160 mg of caffeine in a 16-ounce can. Red Bull has 80 mg of caffeine in an 8.4-ounce can. Caffeine has a diuretic effect, which means it increases urine production. In extreme cases, this can lead to dehydration. It can be particularly harmful in people who drink these products for the first time and don't know to compensate with extra water, says nutritionist and author Beth Warren. The FDA's official stance is that people shouldn't consume more than 400 mg of caffeine per day, but food and drink manufacturers are not required by law to list the amount of caffeine their products contain. These are the unexpected signs of dehydration.

## **ENERGY DRINKS CAN INCREASE HEART RATE**



As a diuretic, caffeine also poses a heart rate risk, says nutritionist Lisa Cohn. The Canadian Journal of Cardiology published a comprehensive study in 2015

that looked at the incidences of cardiac events after energy drink consumption among adolescents. They found that energy drink abuse among teens caused increased risk of cardiac events, especially in those with underlying heart conditions. There were even some cases of energy drink products causing changes in heart rhythm among teens with healthy hearts. This risk increases when the child engages in sports or exercise. In some cases, the high caffeine content of these drinks triggered undetected heart conditions, as in the case of a 17-year-old boy who showed up at the emergency department with sudden onset of palpitations after drinking a high caffeine pre-workout energy drink at the gym.

## **ENERGY DRINKS CAN DAMAGE TEETH**



Energy drink products contain citric acid, which is highly corrosive to teeth, warns registered dental hygienist Anastasia Turchetta. A study comparing sports drinks and energy drinks found that energy products have significantly higher acidity and greater capacity to dissolve enamel compared to sports drinks. In fact, enamel loss after exposure to energy drinks was more than two times higher than after exposure to sports drinks. 'Imagine the collision of citric acid with sugars, and you have the perfect storm for tooth enamel demineralization and/or tooth decay,' says Turchetta. 'Once your enamel is gone, it won't grow back! What's next? Tooth sensitivity and thinner enamel, which will look more yellow and attract more stains.' What's even more

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concerning is that the precise amount of citric acid is not required on the label, so we don't actually know how much we're getting.

## **ENERGY DRINKS DON'T ACTUALLY GIVE YOU ENERGY**



They may be called energy drinks, but the truth is that their main ingredients (taurine, L-carnitine and glucuronolactone) don't provide a genuine energy boost at all. 'Taurine and L-carnitine are amino acids involved in energy metabolism and are naturally found in muscle and organ tissue,' Cohn explains. 'They are used in energy products but do little to boost energy. Glucuronolactone is often said to increase energy because of its supposed impact on energy metabolism, but it has no real effect on energy levels either.' The perceived energy boost likely comes from sugar (glucose is a major energy source) but it doesn't last long before the crash comes. And the adverse effects of high sugar content don't stop there. An energy drink typically contains about 13 teaspoons of sugar per serving—more than double the World Health Organization's recommended daily limit of 6 teaspoons of added sugar per day. 'Over time, this amount of simple sugar exposure contributes to obesity and insulin resistance,' says Warren. 'Studies also show that energy products cause complications for those with heart conditions and high blood

pressure. In the end, what we know and do not know about the effects of energy products is enough to skip drinking them.

## **ENERGY DRINKS CAN CAUSE HEADACHES AND MOOD SWINGS**



Guarana, another common energy drink ingredient, may be a plant, but that doesn't mean it's good for you. It's high in caffeine, even more so per serving than coffee. 'Guarana stimulates the central nervous system,' explains Cohn. 'This provides a feeling of energy boost and mental clarity, and can reduce appetite. However, it can also cause adverse energy drink side effects such as headaches, insomnia, nervousness, and mood swings; it can be dangerous when combined with prescription medication; and it can cause various side effects, from cardiac and digestive problems to impaired judgement and decision-making.' The real danger of guarana is that it's not listed as an additional source of caffeine on ingredient lists. 'Some young adults have reported being sent to the emergency room because of overdoses of caffeine in the form of guarana-based drinks,' warns Warren.



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## ***What's for Dinner?!***

### **Chicken Piccata**

#### ***Ingredients***

- 2 skinless and boneless chicken breasts, butter fried and then cut in half
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- All-purpose flour, for dredging
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 cup chicken stock
- 1/4 cup brined capers, rinsed
- 1/3 cup fresh parsley, chopped

#### ***Directions***

Season chicken with salt and pepper. Dredge chicken in flour and shake off excess.

In a large skillet over medium high

heat, melt 2 tablespoons of butter with 3 tablespoons olive oil. When butter and oil start to sizzle, add 2 pieces of chicken and cook for 3 minutes. When chicken is browned, flip and cook other side for 3 minutes. Remove and transfer to plate. Melt 2 more tablespoons butter and add another 2 tablespoons olive oil. When butter and oil start to sizzle, add the other 2 pieces of chicken and brown both sides in same manner. Remove pan from heat and add chicken to the plate.

Into the pan add the lemon juice, stock and capers. Return to stove and bring to boil, scraping up brown bits from the pan for extra flavor. Check for seasoning. Return all the chicken to the pan and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove chicken to platter. Add remaining 2 tablespoons butter to sauce and whisk vigorously. Pour sauce over chicken and garnish with parsley.

