

The Four Foods that Melt Fat and Fight Disease



Who could've guessed that eating could help you lose weight and make you healthier? New research indicates that some foods can in fact do both.

Tea - How it melts fat: In a recent Swiss study, six out of ten men taking capsules of green tea extract burned, on average, about an extra 80 calories a day—the equivalent of three tablespoons of ice cream, seven potato chips, or one Dunkin' Donuts Munchkin.

A second study, conducted by researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, saw an extra 67 calories a day burned in men who were assigned to drink about five cups of tea (not green) each day. Compared to the placebo and caffeine, green tea extract consumption produced a significant 4 percent increase in 24-hour energy expenditure. If you consume 2,000 calories per day and don't gain or lose weight (you're in energy balance), an increase of 4 percent would translate roughly into an 80-calorie daily difference. Over a year, this could result in eight pounds of weight loss.

How it fights disease: Green tea has long been touted as a cancer deterrent, and new studies are proving that it may actually help against esophageal, lung, and skin tumors. Green tea is also effective against a myriad of other problems, including oral bacteria and plaque, liver toxins from alcohol and cigarette chemicals, and blood cell clumping. According to a study from Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine, antioxidants in green tea may also prevent and reduce the severity of rheumatoid arthritis.

Herbs and spices - How they melt fat: A new Virginia State University study found that replacing ten grams of fat—a little less than a tablespoon of butter per day—by flavoring food with herbs and spices can contribute to a possible ten-pound weight loss by the end of a year. The "warming" effects of some herbs, such as ginger root, chili and mustard, have been shown to increase metabolic rate for up to three hours after a meal.

Dawson Church, Ph.D., editor of *Healing the Heart of the World*, says that one food clinically proven to increase your metabolism is hot peppers. Dawson said that hot peppers have been used for more than 6,000 years for weight loss. The peppers contain *capsaicin*, which

stimulates the body to release the endorphins and neurotransmitters that increase heart and general metabolic rates. He also praised the peppers for being natural, easy to obtain and, above all, tasty.

How they fight disease: Fresh oregano, one of the most commonly used herbs in American kitchens, is a powerful antioxidant about 42 times stronger than apples. Other herbs high in antioxidants include cloves, ground cinnamon and marjoram. Just a tablespoon of any of them can meet the daily requirements for most adults. Thyme, basil, and turmeric are currently being studied for their anti-cancer properties, and a preliminary study by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) found four active anti-tumor compounds in red clover flower.

Broccoli and other calcium-rich foods - How they melt fat: "Calcium not only helps prevent bone loss," says Jana Klauer, MD, whose NYC medical practice is devoted entirely to nutrition and weight reduction. "This mineral is also essential for increasing metabolism levels."

Recent studies have shown that calcium aids weight loss. A study at the University of Tennessee found that when fat cells were exposed to a calcium-rich environment, they broke down fat much more rapidly than when they were in a calcium-depleted environment. Klauer, who is also the author of *How the Rich Get Thin: Park Avenue's Top Diet Doctor Reveals the Secrets to Losing Weight and Feeling Great*, recommends cutting calories, not calcium. As sources of calcium, Klauer recommends low-fat milk and yogurt (e.g., Fage Total 0 percent or Stonyfield Farms), low-fat cheese (e.g., Jarlsberg Lite), calcium-rich vegetables (e.g., broccoli, cabbage, kale and edamame), and high-calcium content mineral water (e.g., San Pellegrino).

How they fight disease: While calcium is best known as a key component in the battle against osteoporosis, it also has other benefits, including lowering blood pressure by up to 5 points.

"An adequate supply of calcium helps muscles, including your heart muscle, do their work of contracting and relaxing," says Paul Tack, MD, a board-certified internal medicine physician on the medical staff at Condell. "Calcium also appears to help your nervous system regulate the level of pressure in your arteries."

Nuts - How they melt fat: "17 to 18 percent of the caloric value of nuts is not absorbed, and they raise one's resting metabolism by 11 percent," says Meredith Luce, MS RD L/N. Nuts also satisfy hunger, reducing cravings for other foods.

How they fight disease: Eating just a handful of almonds may be a valuable tool to combat some of America's leading health threats, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes, according to a recent study.

"It is possible that the fiber in almonds is also affecting carbohydrate absorption, which may have implications for diabetes and heart disease," says researcher Peter Ellis, PhD, from King's College London. Eating almonds as part of a heart-healthy diet appears to lower cholesterol as much as statin drugs. [medicines for lowering blood cholesterol by inhibiting the HMG-CoA enzyme.]

By Diana Bocco