

- Women—health and hygiene

Five foods that can really boost women's health

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Eating foods such as bananas, avocados and salmon could help reduce the negative effects of salt in women's diets, according to new research.



The findings, published in *European Heart Journal*, a journal of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), found diets rich in potassium were associated with lower blood pressure – especially for women with high salt intake.

Here's a look at other foods which might be beneficial for women's health...

LEAFY GREENS

Pauline Cox MSc – functional nutritionist, author and nutritional advisor to Wiley's Finest (wiley-sfinest.com) sustainable fish oils – says: "Leafy greens are a super source of both magnesium and potassium.

"Magnesium is especially important, because subclinical magnesium deficiency is common among women and can lead to hypertension, atherosclerosis (thickening of the arteries), cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis."

Melissa Snover, a registered nutritionist and founder of Nourished (get-nourished.com) says vitamin deficiencies – a major consequence of menopause – can be combatted by eating leafy greens, which have also been shown to reduce fatigue and slow the rate of cognitive decline.

"High fibre foods, such as broccoli, leafy greens, and beans and lentils, can help combat high insulin levels by slowing digestion and reducing the effect of sugar on the blood," she adds.

BEANS

Pauline says: "Beans are an important source of plant-based protein – and protein becomes increasingly important for women as they age. This is due to a reduced ability to break down protein into amino acids; key building blocks for building muscle, skin and other tissues of the body.

"Retaining lean muscle mass is essential for women, particularly as we lose key growth hormones needed for muscle building, at an earlier age than men, usually from our 30s onwards."

TOMATOES

"Tomatoes are a source of lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that may have benefits to heart health," says Pauline. "Optimising cardiovascular health is essential in preventing heart disease. Lycopene may reduce free-radical damage, and have beneficial impacts on cholesterol levels."

NUTS

"Nuts are a great source of fibre, healthy fats and key vitamins such as vitamin E. Walnuts are rich in antioxidants, as well as being a super source of omega-3 fatty acids and have been shown to reduce inflammation and promote gut health," she adds.

WHOLEGRAINS

Wholegrains, such as oats, can be a helpful part of women's diets.

“Wholegrain consumption has been associated with being at a healthier weight and a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, multiple cancers and other chronic diseases,” says Dr Nitu Bajekal (nitubajekal.com) a senior consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist.

“Intact whole grains – such as spelt, quinoa, barley, oats, brown rice and buckwheat – contain significantly more fibre, protein and micronutrients than refined varieties. Oats are rich sources of B vitamins, vitamin E and other micronutrients. Oats also provide LDL cholesterol lowering benefits.”