



Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout February 12, 2023

Matters of the Heart



There are a number of factors that make us more or less likely to develop cardiovascular illness and disease. Most of these, we do not control like age, gender, family history, genetics, race, ethnicity and other underlying medical conditions. Have you fallen asleep yet? Stay with me, the end of the story is really good. Since we cannot control these factors, let's take a look at those factors within our control. What are those? Alcohol (in moderation,) exercise, nutrition, smoking (not) and unrelenting stress. These are the life style choices we make every day.

First, congratulations on your choice to practice and perform Qigong and T'ai Chi. Both have been shown through research studies to improve our overall health including our heart and our entire pulmonary system. You may have noticed that your stress levels improve over time with T'ai Chi and Qigong. Many of you tell me that you feel better after participating in class. This is the wellbeing component of T'ai Chi. Coordinating your breath with smooth flowing choreographed movements is good for heart and soul.

Let's now turn to nutrition. Pardon me, as I get a wee bit nerdy. But, trust me, the ending is worth it. The answer or so the researchers tell us lie in a group of foods that contain Flavonoids,

Flavonoids are a type of plant compound found in fruits, vegetables, spices, tea, and other plant-based foods. Flavonoids have antioxidant properties that help protect cells from damage caused by the normal process of breaking down foods during metabolism. In short, foods that contain flavonoids help to regular cellular activity in a good way. +

Here are the foods that contain high levels of flavonoids:

Berries, grapes, red cabbage, wine, apricots, apples onions, leafy green vegetables, celery, chili peppers, parsley, mint, oregano, thyme, citrus fruits, beans, lentils, peas and soy-based foods.

Now, here is the good part:

DARK CHOCOLATE



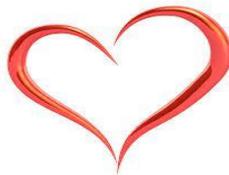
“Research continues to point to dark chocolate as having many health benefits, including a lower risk of heart disease and diabetes, preventing blood clots, improving memory, lowering cholesterol and even preventing some types of cancer.

Dark chocolate contains 50%–90% cocoa solids, which are rich in plant chemicals called flavanols. These flavanols support the production of nitric oxide, which relaxes blood vessels and improves blood flow, according to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. They also increase insulin sensitivity, which may eventually reduce the risk of diabetes. The National Foundation for Cancer Research found that flavanols may reduce the risk of skin cancer and improve overall skin health.” American Heart Association

However, dark chocolate is a high-calorie food, containing about 150–170 calories per ounce. It also contains saturated fat, which may affect cholesterol levels. Research suggests the benefits of flavanols outweigh the risks of higher cholesterol.

But, remember, chocolate is a treat. Enjoy it in moderation for the greatest health benefits.

P.S Supplements are not as effective, if at all, as the food itself



Peace and Happy Heart Day, *Linda*

+ A recent study from researchers at Edith Cowan University (ECU) in Australia found that older women who consumed high levels of flavonoids from plant-based food sources were less likely to have extensive abdominal aortic calcification (AAC). AAC happens when calcium deposits build up in your abdominal aorta, a large artery that supplies blood from your heart to your abdominal organs and lower body. People with AAC have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, such as heart attack and stroke. They're also more likely to develop late-life dementia.