

HEALTHY SWAPS

8 HEART-FRIENDLY FOODS

Keep your heart in tip-top shape with these low-cholesterol food swaps

Around 7.4m people in the UK are living with heart or circulatory disease, says the British Heart Foundation, and research shows that simple changes could help to reduce this. Our experts share some easy switches to look after this key organ.

Meet the experts



MIGUEL TORIBIO-MATEAS
Nutritionist for preventative health care company Atlas Biomed.



LAURA CLARK,
Registered dietician, sports nutritionist, and founder of Laura Clark Nutrition.

SWAP

WHITE ONIONS



FOR

LEEKS

While leeks and onions are packed with antioxidants and polyphenols, leeks push ahead. 'They are rich in kaempferol [higher than in white onions] - a powerful flavonoid associated with a lower risk of heart attacks or death due to heart disease,' says Miguel.

THE PERFECT PORTION: A couple of medium leeks a week.

SWAP

TINNED TUNA

FOR

TINNED SARDINES

'Oily fish, rich in omega-3 fatty acids, are associated with reducing risk of heart disease and maintaining healthy cholesterol,' says Laura. 'But the same can't be said for tuna.'

THE PERFECT PORTION:
Aim for 1-2 servings of 140g per week.



SWAP

ORANGES

FOR

PERSIMMONS

Persimmons are from China. 'They are a richer source of vitamin C when compared to oranges, but they also have higher iron levels,' says Miguel. **THE PERFECT PORTION:** One persimmon contains 20% of the recommended vitamin C daily intake.






Eat Well, Feel Great

SWAP WHITE RICE FOR QUINOA

Quinoa has a low glycaemic index (GI), while white rice has a high GI, meaning that it affects blood sugar (glucose) levels more quickly. Quinoa also has a much higher fibre content. Both low-GI foods and high-fibre diets have been shown to be good for heart health. 'Quinoa has the flavonoids quercetin and kaempferol, which are known for anti-inflammatory properties. There's some evidence that quinoa may help blood sugar, insulin and triglyceride stay in a healthy range,' says Miguel. **THE PERFECT PORTION:** 100g uncooked quinoa.



SWAP BAKED BEANS FOR EDAMAME BEANS

All pulses can help lower cholesterol as they're a source of soluble fibre. But traditional baked beans can often be in a sauce, which is high in salt and sugar. 'Edamame beans contain soya protein, which has its own cholesterol-lowering benefits,' says Laura. 'It works by interfering with how "bad" LDL cholesterol is made in the liver.' **THE PERFECT PORTION:** 15-25g of soya protein per day has been shown to lower cholesterol levels by around 6%. A handful of beans counts as a serving.

SWAP MILK CHOCOLATE FOR DARK CHOCOLATE

Dark chocolate has a higher percentage of cocoa solids than milk chocolate. 'A growing number of studies have found that antioxidants in cocoa (called flavanols, a type of polyphenol), help in the production of nitric oxide, a natural compound that relaxes muscles in blood vessels - thus supporting the heart by easing blood pressure and helping circulation,' says Miguel. **THE PERFECT PORTION:** 35g of dark chocolate (at least 70% cocoa) daily would be enough to give your heart a little bit of oomph.



WORDS: MIRIAM HABTESELLASIE. PHOTOS: GETTY, ALAMY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP.

SWAP COCONUT OIL FOR RAPESEED OIL

Despite being thought of as a 'healthy oil', coconut oil is still a saturated fat and can affect cholesterol. 'Although it can raise levels of good cholesterol it also raises bad stuff too (LDL). 'Swapping saturated fats with polyunsaturated or mono-unsaturated will lower your total and LDL cholesterol by 5-10%,' says Laura. **THE PERFECT PORTION:** Aim for no more than a teaspoon per person, per meal.



SWAP BEEF MINCE FOR TURKEY MINCE

Turkey mince is a fantastic source of lean - so, not too fatty - protein. 'Fat is not a problem per se, but meat that's fatty can contribute to a higher number of calories, and thus weight gain. Being overweight is a main risk factor of cardiovascular disease,' Miguel explains. 'In addition, turkey is a rich source of all B vitamins, known to contribute to heart and brain health.' **THE PERFECT PORTION:** 100g of turkey mince will give you 30g of protein.

