

Onions for heart health

Most Australians are falling short of eating the recommended five serves of vegetables a day, yet most don't realise onions are a heart-healthy vegetable that can contribute to their daily vegetable intake.¹



Healthy-heart eating

A poor diet is one of the leading risk factors for heart disease in Australia,² which is why it is important to follow a heart-healthy eating plan to help reduce your risk of developing heart disease.

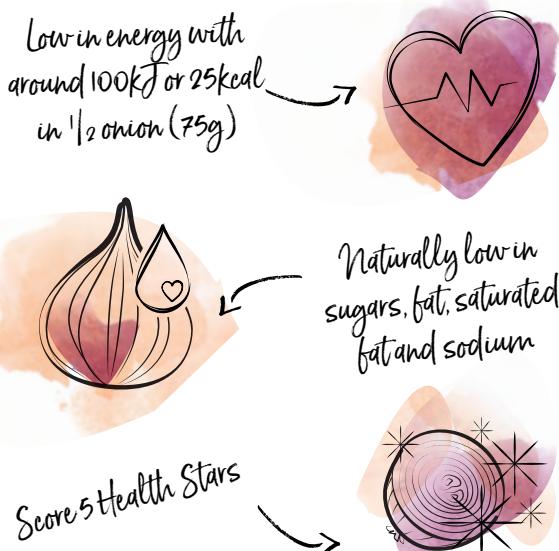
Enjoying a diet that includes a variety of wholegrain cereals and breads, vegetables, fruits, legumes, including soy, nuts and seeds, soluble fibre and healthy fats every day is important to help manage heart health. By eating this way you can help reduce your heart health risk factors, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, and help maintain a healthy weight. Other lifestyle factors, such as not smoking and maintaining an active lifestyle are also important.

Plant power goodness for your heart

Just half an onion eaten over several meals during the day will help you reach your five-a-day target, and they're also a delicious way to love your heart.³

Onion flavonoids

Onions contain unique polyphenol flavonoid compounds. In fact, onions are one of the top common food sources of polyphenol flavonoids, specifically quercetin.⁴ These naturally occurring phytonutrients act as antioxidants and anti-inflammatories to help protect against free radical damage and inflammation, which is important for heart health.⁵



Quercetin is well-researched for its heart health benefits, such as improved endothelial function which helps heart muscles contract and relax, as well as helping to lower blood pressure.⁶

Quercetin in onions is more bioavailable compared to other foods or supplements, which means your body can absorb it well.⁷⁻¹⁰ It's also helpful to know that sunlight boosts quercetin in the outer layers, so don't over peel your onions.¹¹

Remember it's important to eat a healthy and varied diet containing lots of fruits and vegetables, such as onions, to contribute to good heart health.

Onion flavour compounds support heart health

Onions are one of the few plant foods that contain organosulfur compounds called amino acid sulfoxides. These are largely responsible for the distinct flavour and aroma of onions. Sulfoxides also have antioxidant properties which help support heart health.¹²

6 Heart health tips

1. Protective plant foods



Enjoy a rainbow of plant foods every day, including 5 serves of vegetables and 2 serves of fruit, as well as wholegrains, pulses, legumes, nuts and seeds.

2. Go for wholegrains



Choose brown rice, wholemeal pasta, high fibre breakfast cereals, grainy breads and oats. Wholegrain foods are full of fibre and can help lower your cholesterol. Swapping from refined grains like white bread and white rice to wholegrain versions is a simple and effective positive switch.

3. Choose healthy proteins



Enjoy eggs, lean chicken and red meat (but not too much), and some meat-free meals each week, with pulses and legumes. Enjoy seafood twice a week, including oily fish such as salmon, tuna and sardines.

4. Keep the dairy in your diet



Yoghurt, cheese and milk provide important nutrients. If you have high cholesterol, choose reduced-fat dairy varieties or fortified plant-based dairy alternatives.

5. Include healthy fats and oils



Add olive oil, nuts, seeds and avocados to your meals and snacks. These foods contain mostly monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

6. Reduce salt



Cut down on salt and replace with alternative food flavourings, such as fresh and dried herbs, spices, garlic, lemon and vinegars.

Add onions to everyday meals

- Chop up some onion and add it to your Asian stir fry or fresh salad
- Add diced red onion into your salsa or guacamole for an extra kick
- Caramelised onions make a delicious topping for lean meat, and can also be made into onion chutney to use as a sandwich filling
- Include finely chopped onion in fried rice or San Choy Bau for delicious flavor
- Mix onion into a lentil bolognese - perfect for those wanting meat-free meals
- Reduce waste and use leftover onion to make this [quick pickle recipe](#) - perfect for having on hand to spruce up any meal
- For a heart-healthy family-friendly meal packed with veggies, try this [red onion and vegetable pasta bake](#)

Red Onion and
Vegetable Pasta
Bake



References:

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics Australia Health Survey 2011-13 Fruit and Vegetable Consumption. Accessed March 2023. http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2017-18~Main%20Features-Fruit%20and%20Vegetable%20Consumption~105.2.FSANZ_Food_Standards_Code_Standard_1.2.7_Health_and_related_claims_Schedule_4.3_Guidelines_for_healthy_eating_to_protect_your_heart. Heart Foundation Australia. Accessed March 2023. [For information purposes only. Please consult your Accredited Practising Dietitian \(APD\) or doctor for advice on your personal dietary requirements. © Australian Onions 2023](https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Bundles/Healthy-Living-and-Eating/healthy-eating/4.Hoch_M._et.al._The_effect_of_resveratrol_and_quercetin_on_epithelial-mesenchymal_transition_in_pancreatic_cancer_stem_cell_Nutrition_and_Cancer_2020_72_1231-1242_5.Serino_A._et.al._Protective_role_of_polyphenols_against_vascular_inflammation,_aging_and_cardiovascular_disease_Nutrients_2019_11(1)_53_6.Patel_RV._et.al._Therapeutic_potential_of_quercetin_as_a_cardiovascular_agent_Eur_J_Med_Chem_2018_Jul_15;155:889-904_7.Somersel_SM,_Johannet_L._Dietary_flavonoid_sources_in_Australian_adults_Nutr_Cancer_2008;60(4):442-9_8.Terao_J._Factors_modulating_bioavailability_of_quercetin-related_flavonoids_and_the_consequences_of_their_vascular_function_Biochem_Pharmacol_2017_Sep_1;139:15-23_9.Lee_J,_Mitchell_AE._Pharmacokinetics_of_quercetin_absorption_from_apples_and_onions_in_healthy_humans_J_Agric_Food_Chem_2012_Apr_18;60(15):3874-81_10.Hollman_PPC._et.al._Relative_bioavailability_of_the_antioxidant_flavonoid_quercetin_from_various_foods_in_man_FEBS_Lett_1997_Nov_24;418(1-2):152-6_11.Rodov_V._et.al._Ultraviolet_light_stimulates_flavonol_accumulation_in_peeled_onions_and_controls_microorganisms_on_their_surface_J_Agric_Food_Chem_2010_Aug_25;58(16):9071-6_12.Petrooulos_S._et.al._Vegetable_Organosulfur_Compounds_and_their_Health_Promoting_Effects_Curr_Pharm_Des_2017;23(19):2850-2875.

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