



February is Heart Month!

Berries and Cardiovascular Health

Part 1 of 2

*The Canadian, American and British Heart Foundations
celebrate each February as Heart Month!*

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Berries and Cardiovascular Disease

With this and the next essay, let's have a look at recent research developments showing the potential for lowering your risk against cardiovascular diseases by having berries in your diet!

We'll look at one recent advance from research on individual berries.

Disease Markers

- hypertension (abnormally high blood pressure)
- high blood cholesterol
- heart disease resulting from obstructed arteries
- susceptibility to abnormal blood clotting
- stroke or vasospasm related dementia
- impairment of vascular function in aging



Açaí berries (*Euterpe oleracea* Mart.)

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- an extract from açaí seeds **improved blood flow responsiveness** in a laboratory model of vascular disease -- *click on the red words to view a research abstract!*



Blackcurrants (*Ribes nigrum* L.)

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- a concentrate of blackcurrant juice **improved blood flow responsiveness** in a laboratory model of vascular disease (interpreted as the same mechanism produced by acai extract) -- *click on the red words to view a research abstract!*



Blueberries (*Vaccinium corymbosum* L.)

Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum* L.)

- a candidate dietary formula containing **blueberry powder reduced severity of stroke in a rat experimental model** -- *click on the red words to view a research abstract!*



Blackberries (*Rubus ursinus*) and Scottish red Tayberries (*Rubus idaeus x ursinus*)

Blackberry (*Rubus ursinus* L.)

- blackberry juice anthocyanin extract (cyanidin) **prevented vascular constriction and cell damage caused by an oxygen radical** in laboratory experiments -- *click on the red words to view*

*What is the **common effect** from these experiments and **why is this important?***

1. in each case, the positive effect was mediated by berry polyphenols called **anthocyanins** -- the class of natural plant compounds giving berries their dark colors
2. the most common anthocyanin among these berries is called **cyanidin-3-glucoside**
3. it's possible that having berries in your diet can provide adequate levels of cyanidin to improve blood flow, minimize effects of stroke and prevent cell damage by oxygen radicals in blood vessel walls
4. these results require much more basic research to be better defined and **have not been confirmed yet in humans**

Next!

We'll look at more advanced cardiovascular research in humans from studies using red grapes, strawberries or cranberries!

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