



February is Heart Month!

Berries and Cardiovascular Health

Part 2 of 2

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

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Support Go Red for Women! [click!](#)





Berries and Cardiovascular Disease

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

In **Part 1** (*click!*),
we looked at basic research progress in
cardiovascular disease models using blue or black pigmented
berries - açai, blackcurrants, blueberries, blackberries

Here, we move on to the most advanced level of research

-- **clinical trials** --

to see the status of red pigmented berries -
cranberries, Concord grapes and strawberries



Cranberries (*Vaccinium melanocarpum* L.)

Cranberries in Research on Coronary Artery Disease *(click for the project summary)*

- A pilot study is being done in Boston to determine whether double-strength cranberry juice has an effect on vascular function.
- The assumption is that cranberry polyphenols may improve blood flow to the hearts of people with **coronary artery disease**.
- The study will provide information about the chronic vascular effects of cranberry juice in patients with vascular disease (atherosclerosis). If successful, this study will lead to a larger project involving more patients.



Concord Grapes in Research on Arterial Hypertension *(click)*

- An intervention clinical trial is underway in Boston to determine the effects of daily drinking of about 16 oz. (about 0.5 liter) of Concord grape juice will affect early-stage hypertension (elevated arterial blood pressure)
- The assumption is that grape anthocyanins -- which are particularly high in the dark purple Concord grape -- can cause arterial relaxation which would be associated with lower blood pressure



[Strawberries](#) in Research on the 'Portfolio Diet' Used to Lower Blood Cholesterol and Reduce Risk of Cardiovascular Disease ([click](#))

- The Portfolio Diet -- developed at the University of Toronto -- consists of using phytosterols, soy products, soluble dietary (viscous) fiber and almonds -- each having properties to lower blood levels of cholesterol -- in combination, possibly increasing the overall effect
- Strawberries are being added 1) to involve another potentially valuable factor of fiber, nutrient and polyphenol content (red berry pigments) for lowering cholesterol levels and 2) to improve the sensory appeal of the Portfolio Diet and compliance by the study subjects
- In preliminary analysis of this research, [strawberries did produce a favorable effect](#) ([click](#))

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