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Media release

Simple foods can halve risk of heart disease in women

Adding some extra fresh produce to the diet can halve the dietary risk of heart disease in women, according to a US study.

The banana has all the nutrients identified as lowering the risk of heart disease in women.

On average, poor diet contributes about 20% of the heart disease of women aged 25 years or older. Of that contribution, about half is due to an unhealthy fat balance and half is due to an inadequate amount of folate, vitamin C, vitamin B6 and dietary fibre, nutrients abundant in fruits and vegetables.

Accredited Dietitian, Glenn Cardwell says, "Coronary heart disease kills nearly 11,000 women each year in Australia, yet some simple changes in diet can save lives. Fruit and vegetables have nutrients that protect against heart disease. For example, the banana has all the nutrients identified as lowering the risk of heart disease in women."

The study acknowledged that smoking, obesity and inactivity had a greater influence on the risk of dying of heart disease than did diet. A female of normal weight who does not smoke and enjoys a good diet has a strong ability to curb heart disease."

Cardwell says, "It is a common message to eat less highly processed foods and eat more fresh produce, but this research is another reminder that fruit and vegetables have a significant role in keeping women alive for longer.

"Snacking on a banana can help women protect themselves against heart disease as it has folate, vitamin C, vitamin B6 and fibre, without contributing excess kilojoules. Eating a banana as a snack helps control the appetite and avoids over-eating.

"Choosing a banana for a morning pick-me-up instead of two sweet biscuits will save 3,200 kilojoules a week which translates into a potential weight loss of 5.2kg a year.

"The study also showed that cholesterol in the diet had very little effect on heart disease risk when compared to smoking or inactivity," he says.

The study has just been published in Public Health Nutrition.

A comparative nutrition table is available on request from Geoff Drucker, DYDX Pty Ltd, tel (03) 8610 2521 and from www.australianbananas.com.au.

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