

Health Hints

Fight Heart Disease With Olive Oil

(NAPSA)—It's heartening news: Preventing heart disease may be as easy as adding more of a favorite cooking oil to your daily diet, nutritionists agree.

A growing number of Americans are at risk of having a heart attack, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) reports. Over 35 percent of us—almost 100 million Americans—have borderline-high cholesterol, increasing the risk of developing heart disease.

Fortunately, experts say you can reduce your risk of heart disease through weight reduction, exercise and switching to a heart-healthy diet—one that is high in fiber and low in saturated fat and cholesterol. New guidelines issued by the National Cholesterol Education Program panel of the NHLBI recommend that 20 percent of total calories come from monounsaturated fat, such as that found in olive oil, and only seven percent from saturated fat.

Scientific studies have confirmed that olive oil improves the risk factors of coronary heart disease, such as elevated cholesterol, poor blood glucose control and hypertension, says Dr. Connie Guttersen, nutrition expert at the Culinary Institute of America. In addition to its healthy monounsaturated fat structure, extra virgin olive oil contains antioxidants such as polyphenols and vitamin E. Antioxidants are protective nutrients that decrease the risk factors for heart disease, cancer, and pre-



Reduce cholesterol levels the natural way—use more olive oil, nutritionists advise.

mature aging. The recent discovery of olive oil's polyphenolics is exciting news—they can prevent heart disease by decreasing atherosclerosis, a condition commonly referred to as “narrowing of the arteries.” Virgin and extra virgin olive oil are among the few oils consumed which are not refined and consequently retain these healthy compounds.

If you think you are at risk for heart disease, see your doctor. He or she can conduct a complete blood lipid examination to reveal triglyceride (blood fats) levels and low-density lipoprotein (LDL or “bad”) cholesterol levels.

To learn more about olive oil, visit www.internationaloliveoil.org.