

This Fatty Acid Can Actually Reduce Your Heart Attack Risk by 48 Percent

By Emily Shiffer, MSM Lifestyle



You probably know that your diet is a critical part of heart health. Adding healthy foods that contain fiber and are loaded with antioxidants can do wonders for your cardiovascular system. Now there's another food ingredient that may be even better for your heart that the experts realized: Oleic acid may actually cut your risk of heart diseases by *half*.

A five-year study published in the journal *BMC* found that people who consumed olive oil and extra-virgin olive oil daily cut their risk of a cardiovascular event by 48 percent. So what is oleic acid and why is it so effective?

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“Oleic acid is a monounsaturated fatty acid,” says Luke Laffin, MD, preventive cardiologist at the Cleveland Clinic. “It can be found naturally in meats, cheese, nuts, avocados, and edible oils such as olive oil.” You may recognize these foods as part of the Mediterranean diet.

“Significant consumption of extra virgin olive oil (in place of substances like butter), is one of the reasons why a Mediterranean dietary pattern is favored by most cardiologists when recommending a ‘heart-healthy’ diet,” says Dr. Laffin. That’s just one of the 45 things that doctors do for their own heart health.

How does oleic acid work to improve cardiovascular health?

It helps your heart in more ways than one. “Oleic acid reduces low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels, triglyceride levels, and blood pressure; it also improves insulin sensitivity,”

says Dr. Laffin. “Thus, oleic acid addresses three major risk factors for the development of cardiovascular disease: hypertension, diabetes, and hyperlipidemia.”

You won’t need to eat much: “Daily consumption of about 1.5 tablespoons (20 grams) of oils containing high levels of oleic acid, when replaced for fats and oils higher in saturated fat, can reduce one’s risk for heart disease,” says Dr. Laffin. And while oleic acid can be found in a variety of foods, he suggests choosing plant-based sources.

“Plant sources of monounsaturated fats include olive oil, canola oil, tree nuts, and avocados. I particularly favor the inclusion of extra virgin olive oil and tree nuts in one’s diet,” says Dr. Laffin. A final note: Since most oils and nuts are high in calories, remember to stick to proper portion sizes or calculate the extra calories into your daily intake. Next, read about the 50 best foods for your heart.