



The connection between gum health and your heart

When people think of heart health, it's likely that exercise, cholesterol and blood pressure come to mind. But there's one area that doesn't get as much attention—your mouth.

Your mouth is a doorway to your entire body.¹ The health of your mouth, teeth and gums can affect your overall health. Oral bacteria can make their way into the blood stream and to all points of your body, but most importantly, your heart.

Bacteria from your mouth can cause an infection of your heart's inner lining.² It has also been found in the clogged arteries and blood clots of people who have had heart attacks.¹

1 in 2
of all adults³

2 in 3
of all adults
over 65

have **gum disease** and
are **2x** more likely to
have a **heart attack**¹



Recognize the symptoms

Taking care of your oral health should be a priority, especially if you have:¹

- + Red, swollen, sore gums
- + Pus or other signs of infection
- + Loose teeth
- + Gums that bleed when you eat, brush or floss
- + Bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth

Take care of your mouth

Regular attention to your teeth and gums pays off in more ways than just having a winning smile. Be sure to:²

- + Brush your teeth and gums twice daily
- + Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and replace it every three-to-four months
- + Floss daily, rubbing between teeth below the gumline
- + Use a mouthwash to help kill bacteria and reduce plaque
- + Use a water flosser for an extra layer of deep cleaning
- + Schedule regular dental visits
- + Limit foods and drinks with added sugar
- + Don't smoke or use tobacco

And when you're exhausted and want to skip your dental routine to go straight to bed, think again. The food particles and sugar that gather throughout the day are a feast for bacteria. You're setting yourself up for cavities and more.⁴

If that's not enough of a motivator, remember your heart. Gum disease may be connected with high blood pressure.² And the risk of developing cardiovascular disease has also been associated with poor oral health.⁴

Brushing is a small price to pay for a healthy, beautiful smile. Keeping your heart healthy is an even better motivator. *And that, you can take to heart.*

¹<https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/gum-disease-and-heart-health-probing-the-link>

²<https://www.heartandstroke.ca/articles/can-good-oral-hygiene-protect-your-heart-health>

³<https://www.ualberta.ca/en/school-of-dentistry/about-us/dentistrynews/2023/02/exploring-the-link-between-oral-health-and-heart-health.html>

⁴<https://www.health.harvard.edu/topics/dental-health>



Pump it up: Improving your circulation

Your body is filled with a superhighway of sorts. With your heart at the hub, veins, arteries, capillaries and other blood vessels provide a complex network that runs from head to toe. When it's all working smoothly, oxygen and nutrients travel freely.

Like on busy roads, things can go wrong to cause traffic. Detours and roadblocks can arise to compromise your circulation. Things like plaque buildup, blood clots, narrowed blood vessels and can slow down blood flow,¹ which can lead to greater problems.

What are the symptoms of poor circulation?



Pale or
discoloured skin¹



Cold hands
or feet⁴



Cramping, achy
muscles in legs,
calves or feet¹



Numbness
in arms and legs⁴



Recurring chest
pains¹



Leg, ankle or foot
swelling¹



Veins that bulge¹



Delayed or slow
healing¹

The causes of poor circulation are varied and can be the result of everything from high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity to heart disease and more.¹ Many of these conditions can be treated with medications, but there are also changes you can make.

Changes you can adopt today

Stretch

Before and after any activity, stretch arms and legs. Flexing and extending ankles is especially helpful anytime.⁶

Increase your physical activity

Walking, swimming or biking can help improve your circulation.⁵

Elevate your legs

Rather than make our blood flow fight gravity, elevate your legs above your chest to give your veins a break.²

Wear graduated compression stockings

These keep blood from pooling and prevent leg swelling.²

Hydrate

Keep up your fluid intake to avoid dehydration. This is especially important when you sit for long periods.⁷

Adopt heart-healthy eating¹

Avoid overly processed foods and added sugars. Eat a variety of nutrient- and fibre-rich foods. Choose lean proteins and sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Long-term changes

1

Maintain a healthy weight

Carrying extra pounds taxes your entire body.⁷

2

Quit smoking

Smoking damages blood vessels, causes heart disease and can cause blood clots.³

3

Schedule checkups

Regular medical exams keep you healthy.⁴

No one wants to be slowed down.

Following these suggestions can keep your blood flowing freely and you on the move.

¹<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/decoding-poor-circulation>

²https://www.health.harvard.edu/a_to_z/varicose-veins-a-to-z

³<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/veins-are-a-key-player-in-the-body-heres-why-202311292997>

⁴https://www.health.harvard.edu/a_to_z/peripheral-arterial-disease-a-to-z

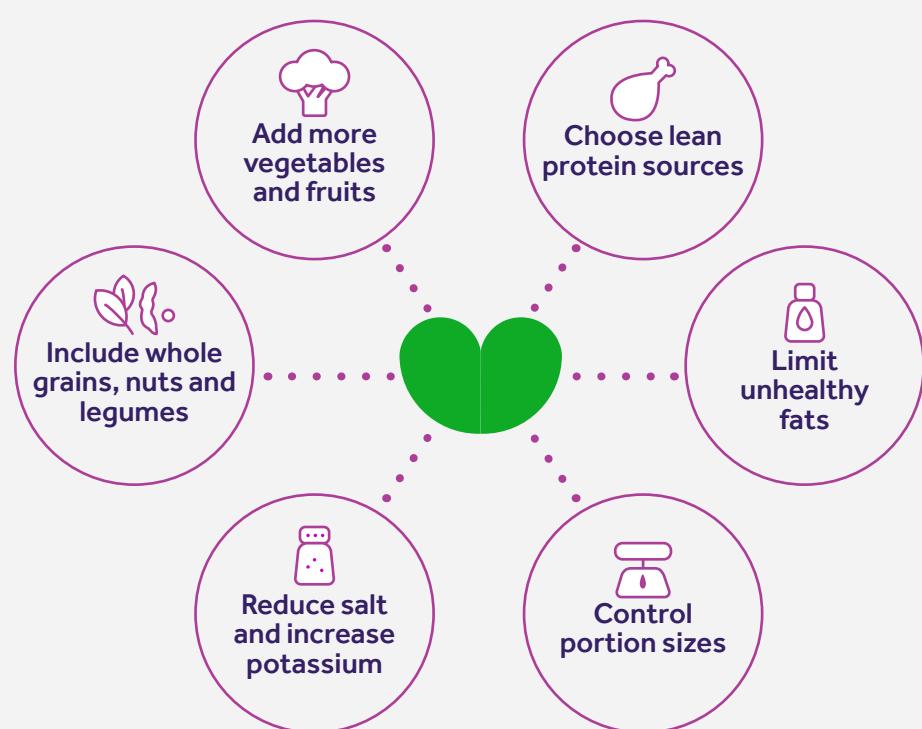
⁵<https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/exercise-and-your-arteries>

6<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/leg-stretching-may-improve-blood-flow-and-prevent-strokes>7<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/leg-clots-aka-deep-vein-thrombosis-an-immediate-and-long-term-health-hazard-201112143955>

Heart-healthy recipes that are not a sad salad

Eating heart-healthy does not have to be the same old sad salad that's been prescribed forever. A meal plan consisting of dry greens, no toppings and a simple diet dressing is an invitation to eat indulgent cheat meals.

It's good news, then, that heart-healthy meals can be super delicious if you pay attention to your ingredients. To make a meal heart-healthy,¹ follow these simple guidelines:



This doesn't sound like the end of the world. In fact, the following heart-healthy recipes will prove that **healthy can be delicious**.

Pasta fagioli

Makes: 4-6 servings | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 1 hour

This vegan dish is super versatile. By controlling how much pasta water you add, it can be soup, thicker like a stew or a hearty pasta dish, especially if you substitute rotini or ziti for the ditalini. Finish with a sprinkle of nutritional yeast or parmesan cheese (making it vegetarian).²



Ingredients

- 1-2 Tbsp olive oil, for sautéing the onion and garlic
- ½ small white or yellow onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼-½ tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 795 g can plain tomato sauce
- ½ bunch fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 400 g cans northern white beans, drained and rinsed
- 225 g ditalini pasta
- Grated parmesan cheese or nutritional yeast if desired

Preparation

In a large pot or Dutch oven, heat the olive oil over medium heat and add the chopped onion along with a pinch of salt. Sauté until onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and red pepper flakes and cook another minute or so, stirring constantly and taking care not to burn the garlic. Add the tomato sauce, parsley and beans. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 1 hour. Stir occasionally to keep from sticking or scorching. While the sauce is cooking, cook the ditalini pasta in lightly salted boiling water. Once the pasta is al dente, drain and reserve 2-3 cups pasta water. When ready to serve, add pasta to the tomato and bean sauce and thin it with pasta water. Add ½ cup at a time, stir and add more to reach your desired consistency.

Nutrition

Per serving



Calories: 371 | total fat: 6 g | saturated fat: 1 g | sodium: 593 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 66 g | fibre: 11 g | sugars: 6 g | protein: 17 g | potassium: 1,129 mg



Baked apples and pears with almonds

Makes: 4 servings | Prep: 15 mins | Cook: 45 mins

The flavour of these baked fruits is deliciously sweet and complex with the addition of honey and spice.³

Ingredients

- 4 small apples and/or pears (any variety will work)
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp honey
- ¼ cup unsalted almonds, chopped
- 2 Tbsp dried, unsweetened cranberries and/or raisins

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 400°F (204°C). Fill a small baking dish with ¼ inch of water. Set aside. Cut ½ inch off the top of the apples (and/or pears). Reserve the tops. Using a spoon or paring knife, core out the fruits, leaving the bottoms intact. In a small bowl, combine the almonds, cranberries (and/or raisins) and cinnamon, stirring gently. Drizzle the honey over the almond mixture, stirring until the almonds and cranberries are coated. Spoon the almond mixture into the fruit cavities. Replace the tops. Place the fruit in the baking dish. Cover loosely with aluminum foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil. Bake for an additional 15 minutes or until the fruit is tender and lightly golden.

Nutrition

Per serving



Calories: 164 | total fat: 4 g | saturated fat: 0 g | sodium: 2 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 33 g | fibre: 5 g | sugars: 25 g | protein: 2 g | potassium: 261 mg



Lemon-garlic salmon with green beans and new potatoes

Makes: 4 servings | Prep: 10 mins | Cook: 30-40 mins

These complete meals in a packet are easy from start to finish. Pro tip: If the green beans are extra long, cut them in half so they fit more easily in the foil packets.⁴

Ingredients

- 455 g new potatoes, halved lengthwise and sliced into 1/2 cm slices
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 455 g fresh green beans, trimmed
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive or avocado oil
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 4 skinless salmon fillets (about 115 g each)
- 8 lemon slices (1 to 2 medium lemons)

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 400°F (204°C). Cut 4 sheets of aluminum foil about 75 cm long. Fold the foil in half widthwise so it's extra sturdy.

Put the potatoes and garlic in a microwaveable bowl, stirring to combine. Microwave, covered, for 1½ to 3 minutes, or until about halfway tender. Transfer to a large bowl. Stir in the green beans, oil, salt and pepper.

Place a fourth of the potato mixture in the center of each foil square, arranging the green beans in the same direction. Place the fish on the potato mixture. Top with 2 lemon slices. Repeat with the remaining 3 salmon fillets and vegetables.

Wrap the foil loosely, but seal the edges tightly. Place packets on a large baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes, then carefully open one packet. If the fish flakes easily when tested with a fork, open the remaining packets and serve. If the fish isn't cooked enough, close the packet and bake all the packets for an additional 3 to 5 minutes.

Nutrition

Per serving



Calories: 453 | total fat: 21 g | saturated fat: 4 g | sodium: 229 mg | cholesterol: 71 mg
total carbs: 36 g | fibre: 10 g | sugars: 4 g | protein: 30 g | potassium: 1,275 mg

¹<https://nutritiionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/disease-prevention/cardiovascular-disease/preventing-cvd/>

²<https://www.delishknowledge.com/healthy-pasta-fagioli/#recipe>

³<https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/baked-apples-and-pears-with-almonds>

⁴<https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/lemon-garlic-salmon-foil-pack-with-green-beans-and-new-potatoes>



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