

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Don't Sabotage Your Salads

It's summer. It's too hot to cook. So you're serving lots of big salads for dinners. And that is wonderful. Those big bowls of leafy greens are protecting your health in more ways than you ever guessed. Of course the darker greens are more healthful than the pale white of iceberg lettuce. Add some spinach, or at least romaine lettuce to the mixture. But please, don't sabotage that plate of health with gobs of salad dressing, spoonfuls of raisins and seeds, tons of salt or piles of greasy fried chicken!

Let's start with the great things those leafy greens can do. For one, they are probably protecting your eyes. It's not just the vitamin A that helps your vision. Dark leafy greens are also high in lutein and zeaxanthin, two types of carotenoids. They help make the dark green color in the leaf. They help protect the lens of your eyes from cataracts, and the retina from macular degeneration. Macular degeneration is the main cause of blindness in older people.

Your bones are made of calcium. But it takes proteins to put and keep the calcium in place. And the vitamin K from those leafy greens is necessary to keep the proteins working right. If you are taking blood thinners (coumadin or others) you can ask your doctor to adjust your dose to accommodate the vitamin K in greens. That way you'll be able to get all the other nutritional benefits of green leafy vegetables and maintain your heart health as well.

The minerals potassium and magnesium that greens provide in large amounts are also very important for your bone health. They work with the calcium to maintain

the thickness and the strength of bones. And they are important in regulating blood pressure, as a balance to the sodium in the rest of our diet. More of these minerals usually means lower blood pressure.

If bones and eyes are not important enough to keep you eating greens, here are a few more reasons. Why and how greens give us these benefits is not clear. There are probably a dozen different ways, and a hundred different ingredients that work together. But, women who ate the most greens lost the least amount of memory over a 2 year study. Women who ate the least greens had the most memory decline. And over 40,000 nurses can't be wrong. The ones who ate the most leafy greens had a 15% lower rate of diabetes than those who didn't eat green leafies.

What about the men? Men who ate about 2 servings a day of green leafy veggies had 15% lower rate of colon cancer than those who only ate 1 serving a day. And in a study of over 100,000 men and women, the rate of stroke was one fifth lower for every serving of green leafy vegetables the people ate each day. Isn't that worth a bowl of greens a few times a week?

What greens are good? The best is probably kale, but spinach, chard, turnip and mustard greens are also powerhouses. Dandelion and beet greens are not as full of goodness, but they are better than pale lettuce. Even parsley is better than lettuce. And dark romaine or Bibb lettuce is better than iceberg.

If you want to include meat or protein in your salad, go right ahead. Just look for a lean, low fat protein. Add some steamed shrimp, not fried. Go for grilled chicken breast or lean beef, not spicy battered and fried chicken. Choose a salad dressing that is reduced fat or fat free. There are plenty of flavored vinegars to use these days, and ready-made dressings in the stores. Skip the croutons and wontons. They're crisp

because they were fried. Go easy on the sunflower seeds, they have plenty of oil too.

Here's a colorful summer salad, not your usual combination but right in tune with the season. Dig in!

Red and Green Salad

Dressing: 1/4 cup sugar or equivalent substitute	1/4 cup chopped onion
1/3 cup balsamic or red wine vinegar	1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
3 Tbsp canola or olive oil	Pinch of salt to taste
Salad: 6 cups torn fresh spinach	1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
3 cups cubed, seeded watermelon	1 slice turkey bacon

Cook the turkey bacon until crisp, pat dry on paper towels, and crumble. Toss with spinach, watermelon and mushrooms in large bowl. Combine ingredients of dressing in blender and blend until smooth. Use 1/3 cup of dressing on salad, reserve rest for another salad. Serves 6

Recipe from 'Simply Florida' cookbook, available for sale from our office.

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