

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Have you given up bacon for breakfast? Skipped the steaks at supper?

Prohibited pork chops on your table, all for the good of your heart? Are you still drooling over the memories, but determined to do your best to avoid a heart attack? Then read on, because there seems to be some good news, and some bad news, on the horizon for meat lovers. Bacon is still bad, but steak and pork chops are not as bad as we thought!

Some of the doctors at Harvard combined all the information they could find from years of diet and heart health studies. They only looked at the studies that had kept track of not just total amounts of meat eat, but what kinds of meat the participants were eating. That totaled 20 studies, about 1.2 million people! In all of them, there were almost 24,000 cases of heart disease.

When they looked at the diets, people who ate more meat were much more likely to have heart disease. That's what we've been told for years, and is why many people try to cut back. But, this time the doctors were able to compare what kinds of meat were eaten. And the differences were very interesting.

People who ate on average just one hot dog a day, or two slices of salami a day, were much more likely to have heart disease than people who ate unprocessed red meats. These people were also more likely to get diabetes too. But the people who ate unprocessed beef, lamb, or even pork, did not have a higher risk of disease compared to those who ate less meat.

What's the difference? Processed meats are defined as those that have been smoked, cured, salted or have other added preservatives. One of the biggest differences is that processed meats average about 4 times as much sodium as unprocessed meats. High salt levels in our diets are all ready connected to high blood pressure. Now they might be connected to other heart disease as well.

The other big difference is the amount of preservatives in the lunch meats, salami, hot dogs and other processed meats. Most of the preservatives are nitrates. This is very interesting. Nitrates are the most effective way of stopping botulism poisoning, so they've been used for centuries in all kinds of sausages. Only recently have medical researchers realized that our bodies produce nitrate too, and that one thing it does is relax blood vessels. So whether the nitrate helps or harms us is still uncertain.

What this recent report does tell us though is that eating meats with lots of salt and preservatives is not good for our health. So, keep on skipping the bacon and ham. If you want eggs for breakfast, fine. Fry them with cooking spray or oil, not bacon. Avoid the hot dogs and the salami. Have peanut butter or hummus on that lunch sandwich instead. It is much more likely that the salt and preservatives are what raise the risk to our hearts, instead of the fat that we've been blaming.

However, as with all nutrition research, we're still learning. So please don't go splurge on 2 pound steak tonight! There is much more evidence that diets high in fruits and vegetables, whole grains and fish are healthier overall. And there's still that lurking shadow that high meat diets could be linked to cancers. Whether future research will show the same link to processed meat and no link to red meat, who knows!

Here's a super-quick beef dish for dinner. Use frozen green pepper and onions, or the pre-sliced packages from the produce section, to shorten your time in the kitchen even more. Serve with brown rice, and enjoy the cool kitchen.

Pepper Steak

1 to 1 ½ lbs beef round steak	1 Tbsp oil
1 clove garlic, crushed or minced	½ tsp sliced fresh ginger
2 tsp cornstarch	2 Tbsp lite soy sauce
½ C water	1 tsp instant beef bouillon
2 C sliced green bell pepper	1 med onion, sliced
2 large ribs celery, sliced diagonally	1- 2oz jar chopped pimento

Cut steak into ½ " wide strips. Toss with oil in microwave safe dish. Microwave on High for 2-3 minutes, until browned. Stir once. Stir in garlic and ginger. Cover and microwave 7 minutes. Mix cornstarch with soy sauce in small bowl. Add to steak with water, bouillon (and optional black pepper) and stir to coat the steak. Add vegetables. Cover and microwave on Medium for 7-10 minutes, until vegetables are just barely tender. Serves 4.