

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

April 6, 2011

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**Grab Those Oranges for Your Heart**

Recent research reports should be great news to both orange growers and orange juice drinkers. If your blood pressure is high, drink OJ. If your bad cholesterol is up there, drink OJ. Even if your cholesterol is good, OJ will help make your good cholesterol more effective. The only downside is that the effective amount of orange juice, 2 to 3 cups a day, will add about 200 calories a day to your intake. So go do enough exercise to burn off those calories and you'll do even more good for your heart!

The first study reported on how effective orange juice is for lowering LDL or 'bad' cholesterol. Whether the participants had high or healthy levels of cholesterol, drinking 3 cups of orange juice a day for 2 months helped them. The orange juice did not increase the amounts of HDL, the 'good' cholesterol in their blood. But, it made their HDL more effective at grabbing loose cholesterol and carrying it out of the blood. In people with healthy levels at the start, their HDL got twice as effective as those with high cholesterol. On the other hand, the LDL cholesterol went down only the people with high cholesterol. People who didn't get any orange juice during the study had no changes in their cholesterol. And none of them had lower triglyceride levels.

The second study comes from France. There the participants were given either orange juice, water with concentrated extracts from the orange peels or just flavored water. They all drank 2 cups a day for a month of one of the drinks. After their month on orange juice or the month with the concentrated extract, the men all had significantly lower diastolic blood pressure. Diastolic blood pressure is the second number in a

blood pressure reading. It's the pressure when your heart is supposed to be relaxed. If your heart can't relax because the pressure is still too high, more damage will be done. Just getting that second number down by 3 or 4 points can mean as much as 20% less risk of artery disease and damage.

Blood vessels in men drinking the juice or extract also were able to relax more between pulses. Relaxed blood vessels let more blood go through more easily. That means lower blood pressure and less damage.

The extract they used was concentrated hesperidin. That's one of the flavonoids in oranges, orange peel and some other fruits. The whole class of flavonoids, there are dozens of them, are antioxidants. Antioxidants are known to protect us, and especially our arteries, from damage and inflammation. But interestingly, the plain orange juice was more effective than the concentrated extract at lower blood pressure. That means that it was not just the hesperidin that helped.

That's not really surprising. Besides having hesperidin, oranges and orange peel have pectin, one of the natural dietary fibers. They have vitamins and minerals, including calcium and a lot of potassium. Those minerals are especially connected to managing blood pressure. Oranges have other polyphenols, more antioxidants known to help keep us healthy. It's the whole healthy combination that works.

Another interesting point the reports make is that using made-from-concentrate juice is probably going to be better for us. The pectin, hesperidin and other flavonoids, and the polyphenols are mostly found in orange peel. Commercially produced juices from concentrates have a lot more of these than juices we squeeze at home because we don't grind up or extract the peels into our juice. We don't eat orange peels because

they're too bitter, so just eating whole oranges won't help as much either.

Finally, how much extra exercise do we need to get to work off those extra 200 calories in the OJ? For a 150 lb person, that would be about 1 hour of gardening or moderate walking a day. So drink your OJ in the morning, then get out and work in the garden in the evening. It's a perfect combination for a healthy heart and healthy weight.

Here's an unusual, orange-y variation on rice for dinner tonight. Give it a try.

Orange Rice

½ cup chopped onion	2 Tbsp oil or margarine
5 Tbsp frozen orange juice concentrate	2 Tbsp dry vermouth or water
½ tsp salt	¼ tsp ground black pepper
¼ tsp ground cinnamon	3 cups hot cooked brown rice

Cook onions in oil or margarine until tender. Add orange juice concentrate, vermouth or water and seasonings. Heat thoroughly. Pour over hot rice and toss lightly until well blended. Allow to stand 10 minutes for flavors to blend. Serves 6.