



food matters

with Consultant Nutritionist Sue Radd

heart attack protector

Could drinking water help you prevent a heart attack? Yes, according to a study of more than 20,000 Californians.*

Drinking five glasses or more of water each day reduced the risk of heart disease by 54 per cent in men and 41 per cent in women.

how water protects

People who drink small amounts of water tend to be dehydrated. This increases their blood's viscosity (thickness), haematocrit and fibrinogen—all recognised to be independent risk factors for heart disease. Some studies have found that the impact of these risk factors can be as large as that of smoking and high cholesterol!

what about other fluids?

Drinking fluids other than pure water wasn't found to protect from a heart attack as did drinking water alone. In fact, with beverages, the risk of heart attack went up, especially in women, with a higher intake from all other fluids combined.

Caffeinated drinks are mild diuretics, so it's understandable to see how they may raise blood viscosity.

Drinking large amounts of sugary drinks, including fruit juices, is also unhelpful. The high osmolality (between 556 and 836 mOsm/kg) of these drinks means that fluid is drawn from the blood vessels and pulled into the gut, resulting in a rapid rise in blood viscosity after drinking. Sugary drinks also raise the level of triglyceride fats in your blood.

drink to your health

Water has emerged as another way to protect yourself from heart disease. Drink at least five glasses each day, preferably 6-10, especially if you live in a warmer climate. It will also help keep your skin soft and supple, and prevent headaches and constipation.

See **page 52** for a winter warming soup recipe.

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