CRANBERRY
Studies show that cranberries deter bladder infections. Potent antioxidant (anthocyanin) compounds that give them their color are anti-carcinogenic, and repair and protect DNA integrity, and help brain function [See AHA 17:1 & 12-4; 20:4]. They are also antibacterial and stop infectious cells from adhering, so are especially useful in treating urinary tract infection. In one study, a cranberry concentrate prevented urinary tract infections in women who tended to experience recurring infections. When women took one capsule of the concentrate (200mg extract standardized to 30% phenolics) twice a day for 3 months, none of them developed an infection. Two years later, eight women who kept taking cranberry were still infection-free.


ANTI-INFLAMMATORY OLIVE
A University of Pennsylvania researcher noticed that olive oil stung the back of his throat in a way similar to the over-the-counter, anti-inflammatory drug ibuprofen and he wondered if they might have similar properties. His observation eventually led to the funding of a National Institutes of Health study. It turns out that virgin olive oil (Olea europaea) contains a non-steroidal compound that slows several inflammatory reactions in the body, including COX-2 (cyclooxygenase) enzymes [see AHA 19:3/4, 21:3].


LIGNANS
Lignans alter estrogen receptors and are associated with a decreased risk of heart disease and hormonally-related cancers, especially those of the breast and prostate. In one study, 170 women with uterine fibroids had a slightly lower risk of developing more fibroids when their diet was high in lignans. Since fibroids shrink when women take hormone agonists, it is thought they act in a similar fashion.

Eating lignans daily (10-30 mg) provides a precursor that the body can use to make another lignan, the beneficial enterolactone (called "mammalian" lignans because they are formed in the intestines). They are found in sesame seeds, linseed oil, different species of cereal, and three types of nuts. They have also now found in sesame seeds found they contained a bountiful amount of lignans (11.5 mg per gram). Eating just 10 grams of sesame oil provides enough lignans to benefit heart and circulatory health. Sesamin, a source of phytoestrogen, comprises about 82% of lignan's content, and sesamolin is about 15%. The compound sesamol was highest in oils that had the darkest color. Cooking with sesame seed oil—heated to 180°C—for 4 minutes did not alter the lignans. The amount of sesamol actually increased after 20 minutes of cooking. Temperatures above 200°C did destroy some lignans, especially sesamol and sesamolin, but sesamol remained relatively heat-stable.


COOKIES LOWER CHOLESTEROL
The idea of eating fiber-rich cookies to lower cholesterol was presented in a paper at the Third Annual Scripp's Integrative Medicine Conference of Natural supplements in La Jolla, California. A double blind study found that just eating a couple cookies a month lowered moderately high LDL cholesterol levels when they contained plant sterols and soluble psyllium fiber (Plantago major).


MELON SIGHTING
A new dietary supplement (GliSODin) derived from cantaloupe melons (Cucumis melo) combined with wheat gluten protects against oxidation in the eye's retina and the blood by 30%. To achieve these results, a study that was presented at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology Eye Research Conference used a potent extract that was seven times richer in SOD than an ordinary melon. The same combination is thought to help prevent heart disease. It helped protect against DNA damage due to oxidation resulting when blood flow is restricted in a laboratory model.
