Flavanols, health and food

WHAT ARE FLAVANOLS?

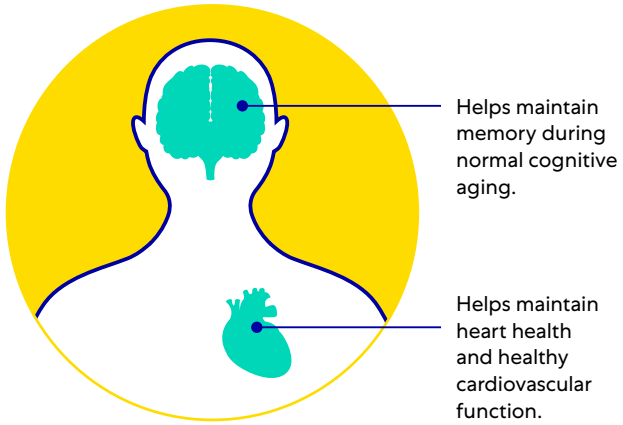
Flavanols are a group of naturally occurring compounds found in various plant-based foods such as cocoa, tea, apples, plums and many berries.

Flavanols are naturally occuring food constituents that can help maintain and optimize health and reduce the risk of certain diseases.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF FLAVANOLS

A substantial body of evidence shows flavanols are an important constituent of a healthy diet and help maintain health as we age.

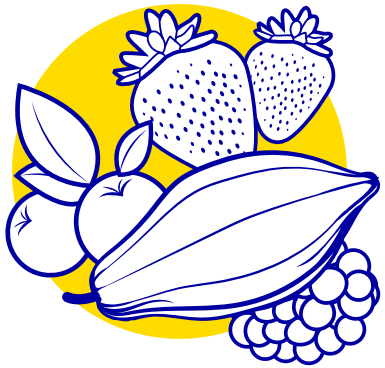
Evidence from large scale clinical trials such as COSMOS* has demonstrated:



***COSMOS** is a large-scale clinical dietary intervention trial involving over 21,000 generally healthy men and women from across the U.S., aged 60 years and older. Participants took a daily supplement of 500mg of cocoa flavanols for five years.

DIETARY GUIDANCE ON FLAVANOLS

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) issued the first authoritative guidance statements on flavanols in October 2022. **It recommends consuming 400mg–600mg of flavanols daily to support cardiometabolic health.** Cardiometabolic health contributes to a healthy lifespan by reducing risk factors for cardiometabolic diseases, including hypertension, heart attack and stroke.



For example, based on this table (see right), combining an **apple, blackberries and green tea**, or **kidney beans, a pear, nuts and black tea** could provide flavanols comparable to the 500mg that were tested in COSMOS.

HOW CAN YOU INCREASE FLAVANOLS IN YOUR DIET?

Combining different foods can help achieve a daily flavanol intake comparable to the 500mg of flavanols used in COSMOS.

Foods	Serving	Serving size (g/serving)	Servings for 500mg/d
Fruits			
Apples (with skin)	large	223	4.2
Blueberries	cup	148	6.2
Blackberries	cup	144	2.9
Cranberries	cup	100	4.1
Plums	cup	165	3.2
Beverages			
Green tea	cup	245	2.5
Black tea	cup	237	7.9
Nuts			
Hazelnuts	cup, whole	135	3.8
Pecan nuts	cup, halves	99	3.1
Vegetables			
Pinto beans	cup	193	1.5
Kidney beans	cup	184	1.8
Broad beans (fava beans)	cup	109	2.6

Source: Gunter, K. (2023) 'Flavanols are linked to better memory and heart health – here's what foods you can eat to get these benefits.' The Conversation.