

How Extra Virgin Olive Oil Can Lower Your Blood Pressure

DRIZZLE GENEROUSLY FOR HEART HEALTH, A NEW STUDY SUGGESTS.

BY ELIZABETH MILLARD

Aug 14, 2020



- According to [recent research](#) published in the journal *Nutrients*, consuming extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) can lower your systolic blood pressure—or the “top” number of a blood pressure reading that is important in determining your risk of heart disease.
- Consuming [two to four tablespoons](#) of EVOO per day can keep your heart healthy in the long run.

Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) has often been associated with its heart-healthy benefits, but a recent [study](#) in the journal *Nutrients* offers further clarification, emphasizing that the type of EVOO you use actually does matter.

Quick primer: There are three main grades of [olive oil](#)—refined, virgin, and extra virgin. The latter is the least processed, and it tends to be higher in a compound called polyphenols, which are micronutrients with antioxidant properties.

To determine whether polyphenols really make a difference on major cardiovascular measures like [blood pressure](#) and arterial stiffness, Australian researchers recruited 50 participants with an average age of 38, and had them consume 60 milliliters (mL) of either high polyphenol EVOO or a low polyphenol version for three weeks. Then, they took a two-week break and switched to the other kind of EVOO for three more weeks.

The researchers found a significant decrease in systolic blood pressure—the “top” number on a blood pressure reading that indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against artery walls when the heart beats—with the higher polyphenol consumption.

Systolic blood pressure is [considered more important](#) when looking at risk factors for [cardiovascular disease](#), particularly for people over 50 since the number tends to rise with age as your arteries become stiffer. The lower this number is (within a healthy range, of course, which is between 90 and 120 mmHg), the healthier your heart is.

Neither diastolic blood pressure—the “bottom” number on a blood pressure reading—or arterial stiffness was affected, but the systolic results were enough to be promising, researchers concluded. They stated that this study provides evidence that a diet that includes EVOO can prevent cardiovascular disease in a multiethnic population.

That last part is important, too, because the prevalence of high blood pressure in African Americans is the highest in the world, [according to the American Heart Association](#). Plus, it develops earlier in life for African Americans than other races.

For everyone, though, high blood pressure increases risk of serious conditions and events like heart disease and [stroke](#).

In terms of why consuming EVOO (like [this one](#)) would improve systolic pressure overall, the researchers noted that past studies have shown that polyphenols can improve function of the

EVOO has been shown to have many other benefits as well, according to sports dietitian [Joy Dubost, Ph.D., R.D.](#) She told *Bicycling* that it’s central to the [Mediterranean way of eating](#) for a reason.

“This is a healthy fat that does everything from improving heart health to making you full for longer to providing vitamin E and antioxidants, so it’s [anti-inflammatory](#),” she said.

Although the recent study utilized a low polyphenol version, be assured that the majority of EVOO has the good stuff, and adding [two to four tablespoons](#) to your diet can keep your heart healthy. Researchers noted that the extraction technique used to make the virgin version preserves polyphenol concentrations, while refined olive oil tends to use chemical processing, which significantly lowers the phenolic content.

<https://www.bicycling.com/news/a33562171/extra-virgin-olive-oil-blood-pressure-study/>