Flu Can Trigger Heart Attacks?! These 5 Foods Could Save Your Life Transcript

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Intro: Flu Season and Heart Risk

It's back, flu season is back. And listen, there are five foods doctors lean on to help patients stay out of the hospital. I'm Dr. Columbus Batiste, an interventional cardiologist.

In this video, I want to show you the top five immune boosting foods that are backed by real science, how they work, and exactly how to use them. plus maybe my simple three-step daily routine that you can copy by the end of this video.

Listen, flu season doesn't just attack your lungs. It actually can spike your heart attack risk several fold. In this view, I wanna show you the five foods that can help your immune system fight back and protect your hear.

Because listen, every year between October and May, now especially December through February, millions of Americans get the flu. Now for some, it's a week of misery, then they recover.

For others, its a trip to the emergency room, or worse, Now we usually think of flu as fever and cough and body aches and chills, but here's what most people never hear.

The flu and other viral infections can actually flip the switch on heart attacks and heart failure. Large studies have shown that heart attack risk, it climbs sharply in the days after a bad respiratory infection.

So listen, every day we're out there, you and me both. We're touching doorknobs, shopping carts, sitting in crowded rooms, breathing air where other people have just coughed into.

Your immune system is on constant defense, constant alert. And I'll be honest, I'm not someone who never got sick. Now growing up and even in med school, it was like clockwork.

Two or three times per year I was getting sick, and it just was part of life for me. I remember my roommate inside med schools said to me, listen man, you get sick more than the patients.

So I said okay. But after I began to take better care of myself, I shifted my diet towards a whole food plant-based diet, intentionalized my exercise and my sleep.

I started building my resiliency, and I start improving. Now I'm not saying I never get sick, but I do get sickness sometimes, about every other year.

It's clearly less often, it's a lot less severe. Feels like just a bit of fatigue for me, thankfully. Here's the big question, are you giving your immune system what it needs, the fuel it need, not just to keep you from getting sick but to protect your arteries and your heart when you do get sick, that's what we're fixing today.

Plant-Based Probiotic Foods

That's why we are here. The good news, listen, a lot of what supports your immune system is not exotic and it doesn't have to be expensive. Now there are five food categories with some solid science behind them.

We have plant-based, probiotic-rich, fermented foods, we have green tea, vitamin D fortified plant foods as well as mushrooms, elderberry, and garlic.

So each one of these, they work a little bit different. And the beauty of them is that they work synergistically. Now some will help your gut train immune cells.

Some will block viruses at the door. some, will your body control inflammation so it doesn't wreck your vessels or your heart or the rest of your system.

Here's the key, you can start today using them all. There's no overhaul that's required. Okay, what's up first? So getting back to the business, plant-based probiotic foods.

If we're talking about fermented foods, I want you to think coconut and soy and almond yogurt. You notice I said the non-dairy ones, right? With live cultures plus kimchi, sauerkraut, tempeh, miso, and other fermented vegetables.

I'm getting a little bit hungry. Now these foods they're actually packed with beneficial bacteria. And these bacteria, they talk to your immune system through the whole gut immune axis.

That's powerful. Research actually has shown that regular probiotic intake, it can increase your antibodies against respiratory viruses. It can improve immunity in your nose, throat, and gut.

That like the added barrier. And it reduces how often people get colds in general and develop the flu-like illnesses, especially in our older adults. So that's important.

We're exposed to all of these things, doorknobs and handles and everything else, but the transition from exposure to illness is what this will diminish.

So quick question, gut check. Do you eat any of these fermented foods? Yes or no? I want you to drop in the comments. Is it yes or is it no, right? So hopefully you're gonna shift over to yes.

And this is why it matters to your heart as well. Because when the immune system is very regulated, guess what? You're less likely to experience the massive inflammatory surge that can destabilize the plaques and trigger the heart attacks the days after an infection.

So remember, we have atherosclerosis and that's the plaque. can become disruptive fairly easy, especially in the setting of inflammation. So what's your action step?

I want you to aim for about one serving or so a day of plant-based fermented foods. About three quarters of a cup of unsweetened coconut, soy, or almond yogurt.

Add in your blueberries, your flax seed to that. Or maybe you're going to try two to four tablespoons of kimchi or sauerkraut. Maybe you are going use tempeh or miso, which are fermented as well several times a week as your protein or your flavor base.

Green Tea Benefits and How to Use It

There's power that's there. Okay, what's up number two? Green tea. So you have to have something to wash it down with, right? So green tea, it has something called EGCGs.

And green is so simple, but it's powerful. It's rich in these catechins, especially the E G C G. In large analyses, they actually show that people who regularly consume green can have about one third lower risk of respiratory infections.

So microscopic level, the EGCG, it can actually make it harder for viruses to actually attach to your cells. That's powerful. It doesn't stop there though.

it interferes with viral replication once they do get embedded and it provides antioxidant support helping reduce some of the collateral damage from inflammation.

that word again. so here's the thing why it matters so much to health care providers out there like myself and my colleagues because we're constantly exposed to all the infections, the viral infections that are there, doorknobs, all

of that from treating patients.

And so the Catechin rich drinks, they have been demonstrated to cut infection rates almost half in some of the studies. So what's the action step? I need you to swap out the coffee for green tea, one to three cups of green Tea per day, just pour it over boiling water on that tea bag and steep that for about 10 minutes or so.

to maximize the EGCG. And once you steep it, you can enjoy it hot or cold, whatever you fancy, right? Now, for best results, drink it between meals, but not with iron-rich meals because you want to avoid any interference with that iron absorption.

Now the third thing that we're looking out for Next is our vitamin D from our plant-based foods, as well as making sure we supplement correctly. Vitamin D is like the conductor of your whole immune system.

It helps the immune cells really begin to recognize the threats. Its almost like that good friend. And you forget that someone did you wrong, get that, good friends like, no, I remember that person, they did wrong.

Vitamin D, Fortified Foods, and Sunlight

That's like what begins to happen is that vitamin D, it helps that immune system recognize those threats against your body and it help support the antimicrobial peptides that will fight the viruses.

So when you have low vitamin d, this is common occurrence inside the winter. Why? Well, you'll have less sunlight exposure oftentimes and that lower sunlight, exposure raises your risk.

And so we get higher rates of respiratory infections, more inflammation, which can worsen the vascular and potentially worse cardiovascular outcomes in some of the groups.

So if you're plant-based, listen, the key food sources are gonna be your fortified plant milks, your yogurts, you juices and cereals, and once again, those ultraviolet exposed mushrooms.

Remember, they grow outside, direct contact with the sunlight. They may be labeled as high in vitamin D or ultra-violete-treated, in this they're going to give you some vitamin-D, but huge amounts, there also going give anti-cancer beneficial effects to as well.

Alright, so listen, pause for a second. This is an important part. I want you to realize that D3 versus D2, you want to make sure that you're having D 3. this actually will raise and maintain your levels of vitamin D better than D 2. But here's the thing, too little and too much vitamin d can cause problems.

That's why you have to get your level checked. On the one end, immune issues. calcium and kidney issues. And so that's why I don't want you to guess. I want to ask your healthcare provider for the vitamin D test.

Listen, the numbers will tell you what you need to do. Do you want a supplement? What dose makes sense? How aggressive do you have to lean on the D3 supplementation versus fortified foods?

And I need you take these action steps. Daily intake of your plant-rich foods that are fortifying. Make sure you ask the provider about the labs. If it's low, dont leave it low.

Right now that is the time to act and so begin the process of Supplementing with d3 to bring your levels in the normal range and listen try to get a little sunlight I'm not telling you a lot of sunlight a Little sunlight because the ultraviolet radiation from sunlight it can directly inactivate many viruses There's power in sunlight just like Superman who gets his power there.

Sorry, so quick check-in If this has been a little helpful so far, I need you to hit that like button. So more people with heart disease, and remember, difference between people who have heart diseases and those without are the people that have a heart problem actually know they have it.

We all have some form of plaque and so it's important and imperative that we all take care of our bodies. And so we want as many people to have the health promoting information that they can receive.

Why don't you tell me in the comments which of these first three fermented foods, green tea, vitamin D, you're already using. Okay, number four, elderberry.

Now, Elderberry has been used for centuries and in modern research, it actually suggests it can reduce the upper respiratory symptoms and maybe shorten the duration of some viral illnesses if you start early.

So some clinical trials show faster symptom resolution, less need for rescue medications, while other studies get more modest, so the evidence is promising, but it's mixed.

I have to be honest.

Elderberry as a Flu Season Tool

And the other thing I need to be transparent about is that elderberry is not a magic shield, but if we use it right and use correctly, it's generally safe and it can be another tool inside your flu season toolbox.

So what's your action step? Listen, during flu seasons, especially if you're frequently exposed, use a standardized elder berry extract or syrup and follow the label from once again, a reputable brand.

You want to make sure that it is an independent evaluator of the contents inside there. Second thing I want you to do is that you're going to look in the range of 300 to 600 milligrams of extract per day, about one tablespoon of the syrup, but always follow the instructions and need you check with your clinician, especially if you have medical conditions, you are pregnant or on medications.

And lastly, don't do what I did, right? Don't eat raw elderberries or partially cooked elder berries. I wanted you stick with the cooked or commercial products because it can cause GI upset.

All right, last but not least, number five on our list is garlic. Garlic. Listen, my mom, I've seen and watched my 90-year-old mother do this for years, that she will chew a raw garlic, and there's so many medicinal benefits of garlic but this is one that I was unaware of years ago, is that garlic once again, it contains that organosulfur compound, the allicin, in this allacin actually has additionally antiviral and antimicrobial effects.

have been demonstrated in lab studies. So, human studies suggest that regular garlic intake can reduce how often people get colds and flus. It can shorten the duration of symptoms when you do get sick.

Here's the trick most people miss. In order to unlock the power to release that cracking, You have to crush, chop, or mince that garlic, and then here's the key.

Garlic and the 10-Minute Rule

Let it sit about 10 minutes or so, because that's when it becomes activated. That's where the allicinase does its job to produce the Allicyn. And once it forms, a good portion can survive cooking.

So what's your action step? I need you at dinner, I want you to chop your garlic first, then let it set, put it aside, And then begin to do everything else, Then you can add it to your soups and stir fries, your roasted vegetables, whatever you're cooking that is health promoting, right?

Once again, crush it, wait 10 minutes, then cook. That's how to turn flavor into function. So, you know, once again you might be saying to yourself, okay doc, why is a cardiologist talking to me about the flu?

Because remember, I have to put on my cardiologists hat for a second. I don't just see the fluid as a rough week in bed. I see what happens in the days and weeks after.

Patients coming with heart attacks, older adults and heart failure spiraling after just a bad cold. People who were fine before a viral infection now struggling with shortness of breath and fatigue.

But I will be honest, it can be hard challenging for clinicians to differentiate between a bad cold or flu and heart failure at times. And that's why large studies have shown us that in the first week after a respiratory infection, especially the flu in RSV, your risk of a heart attack can jump four to six times higher than usual.

Now why? Because viral illnesses, they drive systemic inflammation. That means that plaques inside your arteries can become more unstable. That means that your blood can be sticky in increasing the risk that clot forms.

The fever and rapid heart rate and blood pressure swings put added stress on your arteries and heart muscle that leads to events. So for people with high blood-pressure, diabetes or known coronary artery disease and plaque, a bad viral infection is like throwing gasoline on a smoldering fire.

That's why I'm here. Some of these viruses can also inflame the heart muscle itself, leading to a syndrome called myocarditis. And this can be manifested as chest pain or irregular heartbeats and sometimes long-term weakening of the muscle.

Why Flu Can Trigger Heart Problems

So when I talk to you about supporting your immune system, I am really talking to your about protecting your heart. Fewer infections, shorter infections.

Less runaway inflammation. All of this helps lower the chances that the flu season will turn into the art season and lead you inside the cath lab. So these five foods, they're not a guarantee, but they are practical.

They're evidence-based, informed moves that can really shift the odds in your favor. Turning this into a simple routine, we have to make this plug and play.

We all are creatures of habit and routine. Tip number one, Listen, start the day off with your plant-based probiotic yogurt. Throw in some berries and some flax seeds.

If you're like me and you don't really care for yogurt, add that yogurt to your green smoothie, right? And so you are still getting it. Then swap out the mid-morning coffee for one cup of steep green tea.

Remember, steeping it for about 10 minutes or so while you do some of your emails and messages. And by late morning, you've already hit two of the five immune-boosting foods.

Now, that's tip number two. Listen. Garlic first, everything else second. So get that garlic like we talked about. Chop it, mince it. Let it sit for 10 minutes and prep everything else and then put the garlic in.

This simple habit will turn and transform those everyday meals into immune-supportive meals. Plus you can have another drink of that green tea as well.

I need you to think season, not SOS.

Simple Daily Routine and Closing Advice

Don't just reach for these foods when you're feeling a tickle in your throat or feeling less than well Make for-minute foods a daily thing and rotate the green tea into your mornings and afternoons.

Use the fortified plant-based milks and yogurts and mushrooms on a weekly basis. And most importantly, ask your clinician about your vitamin D level and whether or not you need to have a D3 supplementation.

Keep the elderberry handy as a flu season support tool. Listen, the goal is steady daily support so that when

viruses show up, listen, your body and your heart are as ready as possible.

Your immune system, it's your bodies personal defense, but we have to support it. And these five foods are the training program, once again. Plant-based probiotics train your immune cell.

Greens tea, it blocks the viruses. Vitamin D, is the orchestra, right? Keeps your orchestra in rhythm. Elderberry, shortens the rhythm, and garlic, brings direct antiviral support, especially if you use the 10-minute rule.

So listen, I want you to remember, if you wanna go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, together. So I wanna to far together with you, building healthier hearts and stronger communities.

I think you'll like it. Share it, send it save a life. Most importantly, stay strong and healthy and I'll see you next time in the video.