

FRUIT SCOOPS

Strawberries Boost Heart Health

(NAPSA)—First it was cholesterol, then “bad” cholesterol (LDL) and “good” cholesterol (HDL). Now there’s a new factor that may be important in predicting the risk of heart disease: it’s called C-reactive protein, or CRP. A new Harvard study suggests that eating strawberries at least two times a week may be associated with reducing elevated CRP and LDL levels.

CRP is a protein in the blood that is elevated in response to injury, such as the chronic injury to blood vessels that comes from having damaged arteries. Previous studies have shown that elevated CRP may explain heart disease in people who otherwise appear to have very low risk, even among those with normal cholesterol levels.

Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can lower CRP, an effect attributed to the high amounts of antioxidants found in these foods. Because strawberries are an antioxidant powerhouse, they were singled out for a closer look by nutrition scientists.

In the new study, diet records and blood samples from 27,000 women enrolled in the Women’s Health Study were analyzed and compared with their risk of developing heart disease over a 10-year period. When the women were separated into high- and low-



A healthy indulgence: Strawberries may reduce the risk of heart disease.

strawberry intake groups, those with the highest intakes—two or more servings of strawberries a week—were found to be less likely to have elevated CRP in their blood. They also had slightly lower cholesterol levels.

Although the study was not designed to show cause and effect, the findings add to a growing body of research showing how eating strawberries may support a healthy heart.

The researchers also noted that the women who ate the most strawberries were the same ones most likely to engage in a heart-healthy lifestyle. They ate more fruits and vegetables daily, exercised more and smoked less.

For more information about California strawberries and heart health, visit www.calstrawberry.com.