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From And For The Heart, My Dear Valentine: Broccoli

ScienceDaily — Wishing your Valentine good heart health on February 14 -- and throughout 2008?

Then consider the food some people love to hate, and hand over a gift bag of broccoli along with that heart-shaped box of chocolates. Researchers in Connecticut are reporting impressive new evidence that eating broccoli may protect against heart disease.

Researchers have known for years that broccoli is a rich source of antioxidants, vitamins, and fiber that may protect against cancer, Dipak K. Das and colleagues note. Other studies also suggest that broccoli may benefit the heart, although scientists do not know how it works.

Das and colleagues now report evidence on that topic from animal studies. They gave broccoli extract to lab rats for one month and measured its effects on the rats' heart muscle. Compared to a control group that ate a regular diet, the broccoli-fed animals had improved heart function and less heart muscle damage when deprived of oxygen.

Broccoli's heart-healthy effects are likely due to its high concentrations of certain substances that seem to boost levels of a heart-protective protein called thioredoxin, the researchers note.

The article "Broccoli: A Unique Vegetable That Protects Mammalian Hearts through the Redox Cycling of the Thioredoxin Superfamily" is scheduled for the Jan. 23 issue of ACS' Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry.

Adapted from materials provided by American Chemical Society.

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