

## Go Frozen!

Let's be honest. No matter how much you enjoy fresh fruits and veggies, you have to admit that they can be a bit of a hassle. They require frequent trips to the grocery store or farmers' market. Then there's the prepping. And the cost—have you checked the price of fresh berries lately?

Don't get me wrong. I love in-season produce, but I've also come to appreciate the ready-to-go bounty of frozen produce. Processed foods get a deservedly bad rap these days, but frozen fruits and veggies really are good—and good for you.

"There are a lot of great arguments for using frozen produce," says Lisa R. Young, PhD, RD, a nutritionist in private practice in New York City...

• **Locked-in nutrition.**

Fresh produce is often picked early (so that it will look good when it reaches the store). But frozen produce is harvested at the peak of ripeness—when nutrient levels are highest. Studies have shown that some frozen produce has *more* vitamins



## » THE MUST-HAVE TESTS

Below are four simple tests that can catch arterial damage at the earliest possible stage—when it can still be reversed and before it has a chance to cause a heart attack or stroke. *My advice:* Even though doctors don't routinely order these tests, everyone over age 50 should have them at least once—and sometimes more often, depending on the findings. Smokers and people with diabetes, very high cholesterol levels (more than 300 mg/dL) and/or a family history of heart disease should have these tests before age 50. *Having these tests can literally save your life...*

• **Coronary calcium computed tomography (CT) scan.** This imaging test checks for calcium deposits in the arteries—a tell-tale sign of atherosclerosis. People who have little or no calcium in the arteries (a score of zero) have less than a 5% risk of having a heart attack over the next three to five years. The risk is twice as high in people with a score of one to 10...and *more than nine times* higher in those with scores

have a score of zero are unlikely to develop *arterial calcification* later in life. Those who do have deposits will know what they have to do—exercise, eat a more healthful diet, manage cholesterol and blood pressure, etc.

One drawback, however, is radiation exposure. Even though the dose is low (much less than you'd get during cardiac catheterization, for example), you should always limit your exposure.

**MY ADVICE:** Choose an imaging center with the fastest CT machine. A faster machine (a 256-slice CT, for example) gives less radiation exposure than, say, a 64-slice machine.

• **Carotid intima-media thickness (CIMT).** The *intima* and *media* are the innermost linings of blood vessels. Their combined thickness in the carotid arteries in the neck is affected by how much plaque is present. Thickening of these arteries can indicate increased risk for stroke and heart attack.

The beauty of this test is that it's performed with ultrasound. There's no radiation, it's fast (10 minutes)

More than 50% of heart attacks occur in people with normal LDL cholesterol levels.

## Life Changers in this issue...

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to go. You can go straight from the bag into a sauté pan or microwave dish—or into the blender for a “berry-good” smoothie (see page 15).

Maybe it's time for experts to quit emphasizing “fresh” quite so much. The most healthful fruits and vegetables are the ones that we actually eat—and the freezer section sure makes it easier.

*Rebecca Shannoakoua*

ily history of heart disease, I advise everyone to have this test at about age 50.\* The test takes only 10 to 15 minutes and doesn't require the injection of a contrast agent.

*Cost:* \$99 and up, which may be covered by insurance.

I use the calcium score as a one-time test. Unless they abandon their healthy habits, people who

\* People already diagnosed with heart disease and/or who have had a stent or bypass surgery do not need the coronary calcium CT.

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t you can re health-

d the use of statin medications. Pomegranate—the whole fruit, juice or a supplement—can reduce carotid plaque, too. In addition, research has found Kyolic “aged” garlic (the product brand studied) and vitamin K-2 to also be effective.

*Cost:* \$250 to \$350. It may not be covered by insurance.

• **Advanced lipid test.** Traditional cholesterol tests are less helpful than experts once thought—particularly because more than