Magnesium is one of the top four nutrients I recommend for heart health, and with good reason. Magnesium benefits the heart in many important ways including supporting healthy blood pressure, preventing cardiac arrhythmias, and even preventing heart attacks and sudden cardiac death. Now, promising research published in the British Journal of Cancer suggests we can add another important magnesium benefit to that list—preventing pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Daniel Dibaba, a PhD student at the School of Public Health-Bloomington, and his fellow researchers analyzed data collected in the VITamins and Lifestyle study which included more than 66,000 men and women ages 50 to 76—looking at the relationship between magnesium consumption and pancreatic cancer. What they found is that there’s an inverse relationship between magnesium consumption and the risk of pancreatic cancer.

Specifically, they found that there was a 24% increase in pancreatic cancer risk for every 100 mg-per-day decrease in magnesium consumption. So higher levels of magnesium were protective against pancreatic cancer—and this held true regardless of age, gender, body mass index, and NSAID use.

While previous studies have looked at the link between low levels of magnesium and diabetes, this is the first study to explore the direct link between magnesium and pancreatic cancer. Given the fact that pancreatic cancer is the fourth leading cause of death for both men and women—and that the number of deaths from pancreatic cancer is on the rise—this is a very important finding.

I wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Dibaba and his team that prevention is key! This is especially true if you’re at higher risk for developing pancreatic cancer due to gender (men are 30% more likely to develop pancreatic cancer than women), age (the average age of diagnosis is 71), obesity, smoking, family history, chronic inflammation, or being of African American descent.

How Can You Ensure That You’re Getting Enough Magnesium?

The best way to get magnesium’s benefits is to include magnesium rich foods in your diet. One of the best dietary sources of magnesium is dark leafy green vegetables.
Juicing and making “green drinks” rich in dark leafy greens is an excellent way to get more magnesium-rich greens in your diet, while helping to detoxify and protect your pancreas and liver. Nuts also contain magnesium, especially cashews, almonds, pumpkin and sesame seeds. Plus, some of the whole foods richest in magnesium include tofu, navy beans, lima beans, and figs.

Supplements are also an excellent way to get the benefits of magnesium. I recommend looking for a full-spectrum magnesium formula. While individual needs will vary based your individual magnesium levels, in general healthy people should take 400 mg a day, and those with health concerns can consider doubling that to 800 mg daily.

**Now it’s your turn:** Do you take magnesium, or eat magnesium-rich foods?

*This article originally appeared on Dr. Sinatra’s website.*