

Is your olive oil in an opaque bottle or at least in a dark place?



If not, it may be quickly losing some of its ability to protect your blood vessels

According to a recent study, antioxidants in virgin olive oil help relax blood vessels and improve circulation, which may lower people's risk of atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

However, the antioxidant value of olive oil can degrade after only a few months of exposure to heat and light. Store your olive oil in an opaque bottle and in a cool, dark place.

In a small study, participants who suffered from high cholesterol were fed two high-fat meals. One meal included a virgin olive oil high in phenols, which have antioxidant properties. The other meal used olive oil which was low in phenols.

Researchers measured blood flow at 2 hours and 4 hours following each meal and discovered that the phenol-rich virgin olive oil helped blood vessels to dilate, thereby improving circulation.

Researchers believe phenols in olive oil improve blood vessel function by combating oxidative damage and increasing production of nitric oxide, a molecule that relaxes blood vessels.

Exposure to air, light, and heat oxidizes olive oil, so ensure you maximize the nutritive value of your oil by storing it properly.

As part of a heart-healthy lifestyle, use virgin olive oil in vinaigrettes or any of your favourite recipes that require oil. Virgin olive oil tends to be higher in phenolic compounds than regular olive oil.

[Virgin olive oil storage and stability](#). Giovacchino, L., Mucciarella, M.R., et al 2002. Acta Horticulturae (ISHS) 586:567-569.

Enjoy the balmy month of February, despite being back at work!