

DIETARY CHOICES

that may impact BLEEDING

Over 180 foods and dietary supplements have evidence to suggest they may promote bleeding. If you have a tendency to bleed easily, foods that may thin your blood or reduce your ability to clot can be harmful. For this reason, it is important to know what dietary choices may increase bleeding.

HOW DO FOODS INCREASE BLEEDING?

There are several different ways that foods can increase bleeding. They can...

- Increase the flow of blood
- Inhibit platelet clumping
Note: platelets are tiny cells in the blood that help your blood form clots to stop bleeding
- Affect other factors in the blood clotting process
- Affect the metabolism of blood thinning drugs (e.g. warfarin), leading to increased levels of these drugs in the blood

FISH OIL

- Omega-3 fatty acids known as docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) are found naturally in oily fish such as sardines, salmon, herring, and mackerel
- DHA and EPA can interfere with platelet clumping, making blood less likely to clot
- Bleeding can occur with small doses of fish oil, but you are more likely to bleed at doses greater than 3 grams of EPA and/or DHA per day
- One 75 gram (3 ounce) serving of oily fish contains approximately 1 gram of EPA + DHA.
- **Oily fish is safe when consumed in moderation (e.g. 2-3 servings per week)**
- **Fish oil should be avoided in pill or liquid form.**



GARLIC

- Raw garlic contains ajoene, a compound that binds to platelets and prevents them from clumping together
- In order for garlic to affect platelet clumping, it must be eaten raw and in amounts greater than 5 grams (1-2 cloves) per day
- Garlic oil and garlic supplements may contain large amounts of ajoene, putting you at high risk of bleeding if you take these products
- Garlic might also increase the effects of warfarin and other blood-thinning drugs
- **Cooked garlic is safe to consume**
- **Avoid taking garlic supplements and/or eating more than 1-2 cloves of raw garlic per day**



GINSENG

- The Asian herb ginseng contains ginsenoside, a compound that interferes with platelet clumping
- **Avoid taking ginseng supplements and foods/beverages containing ginseng**



GINKGO BILOBA

- Ginkgo biloba extract, found in supplement form and also commonly added to teas and energy drinks, interferes with platelet clumping and may also increase blood flow
- Episodes of spontaneous bleeding have been reported in young, healthy people taking supplements containing Ginkgo biloba extract
- **Avoid taking Ginkgo biloba supplements and foods/beverages containing Ginkgo biloba**



GINGER

- Raw ginger root contains gingerol, a compound that has been shown to interfere with platelet clumping and may also increase blood flow
- The evidence is conflicting: lab data suggests ginger may increase bleeding but human and animal studies have not shown this effect
- **Cooked ginger is safe to consume**
- **Be cautious if you are taking ginger supplements or eating raw ginger regularly**



ALCOHOL

- Alcohol can affect bleeding in three ways: it increases blood flow, inhibits platelet clumping, and alters other factors in the blood clotting process
- The response to alcohol varies from person to person. For some people, moderate alcohol consumption (1-2 drinks per day) has no effect on bleeding. In other people, a small alcoholic beverage can cause bleeding
- **Be cautious of how much alcohol you drink**

SALICYLATES

- Salicylates (pronounced “*suh-lis-uh-leyts*”) are compounds that occur naturally in many foods
- Foods higher in salicylates include some fruits (e.g. berries, pineapple, cherries, dried fruits), some herbs and spices, some tea, licorice, peppermint, some honey, and some vegetables (e.g. eggplant, broccoli, green pepper)
- Salicylates closely resemble salicylic acid, the active ingredient in aspirin. Salicylates may increase bleeding in a manner similar to aspirin: by interfering with platelet clumping.
- The amount of salicylates in foods varies according to the plant variety and growing conditions. In addition, some people are sensitive to salicylates while other people are not. For these reasons, it is difficult to know which foods should be avoided to reduce bleeding risk.
- **Consume all foods in moderation, and consider limiting your intake of salicylate-rich foods ONLY if they seem to be making your bleeding worse**