

**AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS RELEASE (letterhead  
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**INSERT QUOTE FROM AHA**

## **Watermelon Takes its Health Benefits to Heart**

**CONTACT:** Heidi McIntyre  
Samantha Winters  
(407) 895-5100  
wmelon@watermelon.org

ORLANDO, FL (April 25, 2000) -- Watermelon now carries the official "heart-healthy" certification by the American Heart Association. "We're very excited about watermelon meeting the American Heart Association's certification requirements," said William Watson, NWPB executive director. "Our goal is to educate consumers on the positive nutritional and health benefits that watermelon provides."

According to Watson, watermelon has always been a good source of vitamins A and C, and provides potassium and fiber. But now consumers have even more reasons to enjoy a sweet slice of refreshing watermelon because recent research has shed new light on its potential health benefits.

"This year we're focusing our efforts on a national health and wellness publicity campaign," said Heidi McIntyre, NWPB's director of marketing. "This includes a new health brochure that will be available to consumers via our Web site."

According to McIntyre, to become certified by the American Heart Association, a product must be low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, and meet specific nutrient requirements for making a coronary heart disease health claim.

Now that watermelon is certified by the American Heart Association, the heart-check certification mark and statement will appear on product packaging such as bin designs, brochures and promotional materials developed by the NWPB.

Certification does more than inform consumers. The American Heart Association research indicates that:

- ❑ 89% of grocery shoppers find it helpful for the American Heart Association to certify products.
- ❑ Shoppers are willing to change products when the heart-check is displayed on a package, with 79% of shoppers likely to select a certified product over a non-certified product when the products are otherwise the same.

*(more)*

Findings from scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) indicate that watermelon also contains high levels of lycopene – a powerhouse antioxidant that may help the body fight cancer and prevent disease. Found only in select fruits and vegetables, lycopene is very effective at trapping cancer-promoting agents called oxygen-free radicals. Lycopene is found in red varieties of watermelon. In fact, it gives watermelon its red color and in some cases, the redder the watermelon, the more lycopene it contains.

When it comes to great taste *and* great health, watermelon is a year-round way to boost your health esteem.

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