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"This story on a distressing condition, and its reduction of incidence risk, are something that can be delivered on in our breeding programmes as we are targeting high flavonoid content, as well as ensuring the resultant fruit taste is great and delivers a nutritional punch.

Berries are associated with health, and some of them have even been dubbed “superfoods”. According to a recent study, they might even be beneficial for our health in ways previously unexplored: scientists in the US and the UK have found that a diet rich in flavonoids, natural compounds found in fruit and vegetables, could dramatically reduce the risk of erectile dysfunction.

The study, led by Professor Aedin Cassidy (University of East Anglia), assessed the flavonoid intake over 10 years in approximately 25,000 men and found that three flavonoids, anthocyanins, flavanones and flavones, are beneficial – and that men who regularly consumed foods high in these flavonoids were 10 percent less likely to suffer erectile dysfunction.

The study highlights that those who take some physical activity and have a high flavonoid intake have a 21% lower risk than those with a combined low intake and physical activity; that the effects were more pronounced in those under 70 years of age; and that the greatest risk reduction was in the younger group who were either overweight or obese. It was also found that overall the beneficial effects equate to 2 to 5 hours of brisk walking.

Commenting on the study, Professor Derek Stewart, Enhancing Crop Productivity and Utilisation research theme leader at the James Hutton Institute, said: “Professor Cassidy and her colleagues have produced a very elegant piece of research based on a phenomenally large group of participants over many years. Erectile dysfunction affects 322 million men globally, and as well as being distressing at the personal level it is often an early indicator of poor vascular function, a precursor of cardiovascular disease. This study highlights that there are simple and enjoyable dietary routes to reducing the risk of erectile dysfunction: eat soft fruit and drink the associated juices.

“The researchers related this finding to public health regarding the top 5 sources of flavonoids in fruit and products in the US, and these were identified as strawberries,

blueberries, red wine, apples/pears, and citrus products. This is interesting as blackcurrant is not so well known in the US but in the UK and Europe it is part of our common shopping trolley, at least as juice, and increasingly the fresh fruit.”

Professor Stewart said that on a comparative basis, blackcurrant has a greater level of anthocyanins - one of the key flavonoids dealt with in the study - than any of the above, even the red wine, which means that these effects are very likely to be found in blackcurrants also.

“The James Hutton Institute and its commercial arm James Hutton Limited are the leaders in blackcurrant and raspberry breeding, both high anthocyanin containing soft fruit. This story on a distressing condition, and its reduction of incidence risk, are something that can be delivered on in our breeding programmes as we are targeting high anthocyanin contents (and other flavonoids), as well as ensuring the resultant fruit taste is great and delivers a nutritional punch.”

To learn more about soft fruit research at the James Hutton Institute, please visit our [Soft fruit genetics](#) ^[1] page.

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Professor Aedin Cassidy, University of East Anglia

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<https://www.uea.ac.uk/medicine/people/profile/a-cassidy>

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Dietary flavonoid intake and incidence of erectile dysfunction, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition

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<http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/early/2016/01/06/ajcn.115.122010.abstract>

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