

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Katie Gravesen, DC

Top 10 Disease-Fighting Fruits

Everyone knows that multiple daily servings of fresh fruit do wonders to reduce weight and supply the body with an abundance of vitamins, minerals and fiber. But Dr. Gravesen also wants patients to know that fruit has the ability to slash risks for chronic diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

What makes fruit so healthy? Among other wellness-boosting ingredients, fruit contains flavonoids, molecules with vast health-promoting effects ranging from anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial to anti-viral. Flavonoids also promote antioxidants, substances that slow down oxidation, a process causing cell and tissue damage and disease.



1. Awesome Apples

The old adage “An apple a day keeps the doctor away” is factual, say scholars. Eating a diet rich in apples may ward off lung disease. Researchers pooled data on 2,512 men aged 45 to 59 who completed food-frequency surveys at the study’s onset and at a five-year follow-up.

After accounting for various risk factors of lung disease, the researchers determined that study participants who ate five or more apples per week had significantly stronger lung function, compared with those who ate few apples (*Thorax* 2000;55:102-8).

2. Perfect Persimmons

Apples may need to share the spotlight with another round and brightly hued fruit: the persimmon. A head-to-head comparison of the two fruits revealed that persimmons contain significantly higher concentrations of dietary fiber, potassium, magnesium, calcium, iron, manganese and antioxidant compounds — nutrients that are all instrumental in fighting atherosclerosis.

The report is the first comparative study of persimmons and apples that evaluated their ability to prevent hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis). Lead researcher Shela Gorinstein, Ph.D. concluded that eating one medium-sized persimmon (100 grams) per day is enough to help fight atherosclerosis. “The relatively high contents of dietary fibers, total and major phenolics [disease-fighting chemicals with high acid content], main minerals, and trace elements make persim-



mon preferable for an anti-atherosclerotic diet.” (*J Agric Food Chem* 2001;49:952-7.)

3. Bountiful Berries

Spring is the perfect time to enjoy a bowlful of ripe, sweet berries. Top them off with a dab of organic yogurt for a sublime, wellness-boosting treat.

And the good news is that you can enjoy this delicious delight guilt-free: Berries possess powerful anti-cancer properties. These jewel-colored juicy gems have the ability to actually inhibit the growth of and stimulate the death of cancer cells.

Wellness Education From Katie Gravesen, DC

Nutrition is an integral component of wellness. That’s why once a month, we present an *Optimal Health University*™ focused on cutting-edge nutritional research.

A founding principal of chiropractic is that the mind, body and spirit are connected. Therefore, during the other weeks of the month, we offer topics on how to prevent additional physical, chemical and emotional causes of *vertebral subluxations*.

Chiropractic care centers on the correction of dysfunctional areas in the spine termed *vertebral subluxations*. This condition is linked with an array of disorders, including asthma, ear infections, back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome and headaches. Dr. Gravesen uses gentle and effective maneuvers called *chiropractic adjustments* to correct vertebral subluxations and prevent recurrence.

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One study included extracts of six of the most popular berries: blackberries, black and red raspberries, blueberries, cranberries and strawberries. Researchers evaluated each berry's ability to inhibit growth of oral, breast, colon and prostate tumor cells. As the concentration of berry extract increased, so did its cancer-fighting properties. Black raspberry and strawberry extracts showed the most significant results (*J Agric Food Chem* 2006;54:9329-39).

In addition to their anti-cancer properties, cranberries possess a unique ability to prevent and treat urinary tract infections (*Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2004;(2):CD001321).

4. Fabulous Figs

Figs provide a rich source of dietary fiber. What's more, they are loaded with powerful, disease-fighting antioxidant chemicals.

Researchers from the University of Scranton found that "figs produced a significant increase in plasma [blood] antioxidant capacity for four hours after consumption, and overcome the oxidative stress of consuming high fructose corn syrup in a carbonated soft drink." (*J Am Coll Nutr* 2005;24:44-50.)

Oxidative stress is the process that turns healthy cells into diseased ones, which occurs in cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and a myriad of other conditions.

5. & 6. Outstanding Oranges & Beneficial Bananas

Think of vitamin C, and you'll think oranges. And bananas are associated with potassium. Yet both crops' benefits reach way beyond their vitamin content. Did you know that they help prevent childhood leukemia?

One seven-year study included 328 children 2 years of age and younger. Regular consumption of oranges, bananas and orange juice during the first two years of life was associated with a reduction in the risk of childhood leukemia diagnosed between the ages of 2 and 14 years.

"These results suggest that fruits or fruit juices that contain vitamin C and/or potassium may reduce the risk of childhood leukemia, especially if they are consumed on a regular basis during the first 2 years of life." (*Am J Epidemiol* 2004;160:1098-107.)

Kiwifruit is also a rich source of both vitamin C and potassium.

7. Great Grapes

Grapes are packed with vitamins and nutrients; however, the skin may be the most nutrient-dense part. The skin of grapes contains a natural compound called resveratrol, which may help protect against cancer.

Research shows that resveratrol has the ability to inhibit the growth of a variety of cancer cells. In both human and mice experiments, resveratrol fought cancer in its three states: initiation, promotion and progression (*Toxicol Appl Pharmacol* 2007; Epub ahead of print).



8. Powerful Pears

The unadorned pear is far from simple when it comes to its health benefits. This nutritional dynamite, which is best picked hard and ripens from the inside out, is loaded with heart-healthy benefits.

When researchers examined food-frequency questionnaires from 34,489 postmenopausal women, they found that pears were among the top flavonoid-rich foods to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and other vascular diseases. The study's data was drawn from three national databases and 16 years of follow-up research (*Am J Clin Nutr* 2007;85:895-909).

9. Potent Pomegranates

Don't let pomegranates' tough, dry skin fool you: Its inner, glistening ruby-red seeds hold a treasure trove of health riches.

A jeweled-like interior and tart yet sweet juice give rise to its "fruit of paradise" nickname. And its health claim-to-fame lies in its cancer-fighting properties. Research shows that pomegranate juice, pulp and oil reduce the risk of breast cancer. "The findings suggest that clinical trials to further assess chemopreventive and adjuvant therapeutic applications of pomegranate in human breast cancer may be warranted," conclude scientists (*Breast Cancer Res Treat* 2002;71:203-17).

10. Amazing Avocados

Avocados? A fruit? Believe it or not, avocados are a fruit. What may surprise you even more is that an avocado-rich diet may help reduce unhealthy forms of cholesterol.

One analysis tracked two groups: 37 individuals with mildly elevated cholesterol and 30 healthy subjects with normal cholesterol. Both cohorts ate a calorie-restricted avocado-rich or avocado-free diet for seven days.

After the avocado diet, healthy individuals enjoyed a 16 percent decrease in total cholesterol. Those with mildly elevated cholesterol benefited with a 17 percent decrease in total cholesterol, 22 percent less LDL (bad) cholesterol and 11 percent rise in HDL (good) cholesterol. With the avocado-free diet, cholesterol increased in healthy subjects and remained unchanged in patients with high cholesterol (*Arch Med Res* 1996;27:519-23).

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