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Benefits of Raspberries

Last Updated: Dec 18, 2013 | By Carol Sarao



Close up of fresh raspberries. Photo Credit Valentyn Volkov/iStock/Getty Images

For many, eating a bowl of fresh raspberries is one of summer's tasty pleasures. Vividly colored and refreshingly sweet, juicy and satisfying to eat, raspberries also offer a bounty of health benefits, from helping control weight to possibly helping prevent cancer. Although it's hard to beat the flavor and texture of fresh raspberries, raspberries can be frozen, freeze-dried, and even dried and powdered without losing their nutritive value. For maximum health benefits, snack on black raspberries, or *Rubus occidentalis*; they are even higher in beneficial plant compounds than *Rubus idaeus*, their lighter-colored cousins.

Diet-Friendly

A cup of fresh raspberries contains about 1.5 g of protein, 8 g of dietary fiber, and 14.7 g of carbohydrates. Cholesterol-free, low in fat and sodium, and weighing in at a modest 64 calories per cup, raspberries are a good choice for dieters. The generous amount of fiber they provide -- with one cup supplying one-third of the daily recommended value for adults -- can help speed elimination and possibly promote weight loss; their natural sweetness may satisfy cravings for less wholesome foods.

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Beneficial Vitamins and Minerals

A cup of fresh raspberries contains high levels of assorted vitamins and minerals needed for healthy body functions, including 186 mg of potassium, necessary for maintaining healthy blood pressure; 31 mg of calcium, needed for bone development and growth; and 167 combined mcg of lutein and zeaxanthin. This pair of carotenoids -- or plant pigments -- can help protect against macular degeneration, an eye disease that can cause loss of vision. The same cup of raspberries also offers up 26 mcg of folate, which can prevent neural tube defects in newborns.

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Alleviate Arthritis

Raspberries can fight inflammatory conditions -- such as arthritis and gout -- in much the same way as aspirin and ibuprofen do: by turning off signals sent by COX-1s and COX-2s, the enzymes responsible for the body's inflammatory response. Researchers believe that anthocyanins -- the water-soluble plant pigments that give the berry its vivid color -- are responsible for its anti-inflammatory properties. Arthritis Today recommends blending raspberries with pure fruit juice and heating them to make a berry-infused, colorful and intriguing sauce for lean meat and chicken.

Antioxidant Benefits

Raspberries are extremely high in various antioxidants, which can help fight aging and slow cancer growth by scavenging destructive free radical molecules in your body. In addition to vitamin C -- a potent antioxidant in its own right -- raspberries contain antioxidant carotenoids, ellagic acid and quercetin. According to the Berry Health Benefits Network, The ORAC scale -- which measures the antioxidant potential of substances -- places raspberries at a very respectable 24 umole/TE/g. The BHBN notes that this is roughly equivalent to the ORAC capabilities of blueberries, themselves renowned for their antioxidant abilities.

Chemoprotective Benefits

As if raspberries' nutritive, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory powers weren't impressive enough, animal and test tube studies have shown that they may help prevent cancer. Ellagic acid, a phenolic compound, can kill certain types of cancer cells, including those of colon, esophageal, liver, lung, tongue and skin cancers. Quercetin is yet another effective anticarcinogen found in raspberries; studies support its ability to act against mammary cancers in rodents. In a clinical study published in 2010 in "Cancer Prevention Research," researchers found that black raspberry powder fed to mice for 12 weeks was highly effective in preventing intestinal tumors. The black raspberry powder inhibited tumor development by reducing inflammation.

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