

The Wellness Family

Dr. Tara Buchakjian Keeps You Informed

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The Benefits of B e r r i e s

Consumers are beginning to recognize blueberries as a nutritious food, full of antioxidants and other health benefits yet there are other berry options that can be a great addition to a healthy lifestyle.

The science behind berries shows they are one of the best fruits available, packed with vitamins and nutrients that research is showing can be extremely beneficial.

The Science Behind Berries

Flavonoids are phytochemicals that continue to be researched, but one thing is clear, their health-promoting properties are noteworthy. They improve memory, are powerful free-radical scavengers, prevent blood clots, protect against oxidation of LDL and lower high blood pressure, reduce inflammation and bolster immune function.

Beyond this, studies are beginning to show that flavonoids may help prevent the development of Alzheimer's disease, relieve chronic fatigue syndrome and slow down aging.

Blueberries

One of the best sources of flavonoids is berries, with blueberries being rated the highest by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), having the capacity to pack in the most antioxidants. When compared to 40 other fresh fruits and vegetables, blueberries were rated #1 in antioxidant activity by the USDA's Human Nutrition Center.

"Blueberries are associated with numerous health benefits including protection against urinary-tract infections, cancer, age-related health conditions and brain damage from strokes," states Dr. Joseph Mercola. Additionally, reducing the build-up of "bad" cholesterol or LDL, which research has shown contributes to heart disease and strokes.

Blueberries are also an excellent source of many vitamins and minerals to include vitamins A and C, potassium, iron and calcium.

Strawberries, Raspberries and More

Second only to blueberries, strawberries are packed with antioxidants and healthful phytochemicals, being

rich in dietary fiber and manganese as well as containing more vitamin C than any other berry.

Raspberries are also a great snack food. Being relatively low in sugar compared to most other fruits, they have the added benefit of being packed with antioxidants, and are high in anthocyanins (a powerful antioxidant) and other cancer-fighting phytochemicals. Raspberries also contain calcium and vitamins A, C and E while being high in soluble fiber, which lowers cholesterol, and these great snack-able berries have been found to protect against some forms of cancer.

As with all berries, blackberries are low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium. They are a great source of



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vitamin C, E and K, folate, magnesium and potassium as well as dietary fiber and manganese. The darker the color of the fruit, the higher it is in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and other important healthful nutrients; so, blackberries are an excellent choice for a berry snack.

Acai berries come from Brazil and are thought to actually rival the blueberry as the healthiest berry, with some researchers determining they have 300 percent more antioxidants. However, while the acai berry is rich in antioxidants, essential fatty acids and fiber, it has had the misfortune of being at the center of many fad diets making it overly priced.

Storing Your Fruits

As with most whole food purchases, they should be made in moderation as fruits will typically only stay fresh for three or four days.

Most berries are best refrigerated, unwashed and in their original container. This should keep them from getting moldy or soft as well as keep them fresh for consumption. A moldy berry should be removed from the package right away, as it will quickly turn the fruit next to it and ruin the whole package.

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Consider the Sources

It is best to purchase organic berries. Research has proven that non-organic are less healthful than their whole-food counterparts. Scientists believe this is because the pesticides and other chemicals used by conventional growers hamper the plants' production of phenolics or flavonoids.

Conventionally grown strawberries, one of the most toxic laden foods available, act like a sponge when sprayed with pesticides and other chemicals, absorbing them at an alarming rate.

In the United States, growers are allowed to use up to 500 lbs of pesticides per acre of strawberries, which explains why one government report found malathion residue (a harmful pesticide) in 25% of fresh strawberry and 28% of fresh blueberry samples.

A similar report, in the Europe Union, found that strawberries in particular contained "a poisonous blend" of 14 different pesticides and that the Environmental Working Group has berries listed as one of their top five items that should always be purchased organic.

Finally, organic fruits have been proven to contain 40% more antioxidants and higher levels of beneficial vitamins and minerals.

Avoiding High Calories

Never juice or blend your berries. Unfortunately, the smoothie has become a favorite drink among those wishing to live the wellness lifestyle and yet it's part of the problem.

A smoothie typically includes yogurt or milk, adding saturated fat to a naturally fat-free snack, boosting

the calorie count from a healthy 53 calories for a cup of fresh strawberries to a diet-busting 350 calories for one smoothie.

Even the smoothies offered at the healthiest of establishments are providing you with five to six servings of fruit instead of the one or two servings you would typically consider a snack, taking your carbohydrate intake from a moderate 13 grams to an insulin-inducing 50 grams or more.

Juicing is equally detrimental as it typically means removing from the fruit the fiber-rich flesh of the fruit, which is really the best part for you.

Finally, do not ever be fooled by a "fruit roll-up" or other so-called "fruit" snacks as they are more sugar and additives than fruit.

The typical fruit snack has sugar in the top three ingredients along with partially-hydrogenated oils, corn syrup and emulsifiers. This will never be a healthy snack option, no matter how they try to market it.

In Summary

We've all heard the saying, "You are what you eat," and that should mean we want to eat natural, whole foods.

Children can be taught from an early age to choose healthier snacks and not to automatically reach for cookies or candy. A selection of berries is a healthier option for both snack times and desserts.

Berries are proven to be rich in antioxidants and carcinogen-fighting phytochemicals. Recent studies have even proven that adding just one serving a day of berries to your diet can lower your blood pressure and improve your HDL (good cholesterol) levels. Every way you look at it, berries are a better choice.

Dear Patient,

Dr. Tara Buchakjian is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.

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