

Nutrition News

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Fall is the Season for Apples and Cranberries

An Apple a Day...

Fall is the time of year when we start to look forward to cooler weather and to the leaves on the trees changing to beautiful bright reds, yellows and oranges. It is also the time of the year for harvesting the many varieties of apples. About 2,500 varieties of apples are grown in the United States and 100 varieties grown commercially.

A member of the rose family, apples come in a variety of colors. They come in all shades of reds, greens and yellows. Some apples are more suited for baking and cooking, while others perform better as snacks.

A variety of health benefits also comes in this very tasty fruit. As early as medieval times, apples and products made from apples have been used for their health benefits. The saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," is the modern version of the Old English saying, "Ate an apfel avore gwain to bed Makes the doctor beg his bread." So how do apples actually keep the doctor away? And why doesn't the old saying apply to bananas, or oranges or even pears?

Apples have many properties that no other fruits have, and its benefits have been proven over time. These benefits can be found individually in other fruits, but the apple is a compact source of these benefits. Eaten with the skin, an apple is a portable package of nutrients.

- 🍏 Eating five apples or more per week has shown to lower the risk of respiratory problems like asthma.
- 🍏 The abundance of flavonoids (a type of pigment in apples that helps provide their color) in apples can help prevent heart disease. Apples help protect arteries from plaque build-up.

- 🍏 Apples contain phenols, which help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and increase HDL (good) cholesterol. The pectin in apples is a soluble fiber that also helps lower LDL cholesterol. Lowering cholesterol levels helps reduce the risk of hardening of the arteries, heart attack and stroke.
- 🍏 The flavonoids in apples also have been shown to help protect against cancers, including colon, prostate and lung and breast cancer in women.
- 🍏 Phytonutrients found in apples helps to protect the brain from age-related diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.
- 🍏 Apples help prevent tooth decay, which is caused from a breakdown of the enamel on the teeth by bacteria. The juice of an apple has properties that can kill up to 80 percent of bacteria.
- 🍏 Apples, including the skin, have been shown to help lower the risk of type 2 diabetes.
- 🍏 The soluble and insoluble fibers in apples help relieve constipation, thus preventing diverticulosis and colon cancer.
- 🍏 A raw medium apple (2 1/2 inches in diameter), eaten with the skin, is low in fat and calories and high in vitamins and minerals. It has only 80 calories, 5 grams of fiber and 6 percent of potassium. It also contains calcium, phosphorus, iron and vitamins C and A. The apple contains about 80-85 percent water, 5 percent protein and 10-15 percent carbohydrates. It is sodium and fat free!

To get all the benefits that an apple has to offer, be sure to eat the skin – after washing thoroughly, of course. The apple skin alone provides two to six times the antioxidants than the flesh. Antioxidants are substances

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and nutrients found in some foods that can prevent damage to your body cells or repair damage that has already been done.

Americans consume an average of around 20 pounds of apples per year, which translates into about one apple a week. Although an apple a week is better than none at all, it is not enough to reap all the benefits that this fruit has to offer. If you don't like one variety of apples, try another – many other varieties can satisfy your taste buds.

Cranberries for Health and Holidays

October is the time of year that cranberries also appear on the grocery store shelves. A cousin of the blueberry, the tart, bright red cranberry is grown on low-trailing vines in sandy bogs in the northern United States and southern Canada, as well as in Europe and Asia. Fresh cranberries are at their peak from October through December, just in time to add some health benefits to those holiday meals.

As with apples, cranberries carry many health benefits. As a matter of fact, cranberries are among the top foods with proven health benefits. It has been well-noted that cranberries have the ability to help prevent and treat urinary tract infections. Cranberries increase the acidity of urine. The increased acidity reduces the ability of E. coli bacteria to adhere to the walls of the urinary tract. Thus, bacteria is washed away in the urine and excreted. Since 80-90 percent of urinary tract infections are caused by E. coli, cranberries greatly reduce the risk of infection.

Cranberries also:

- Increase HDL (good) cholesterol. Studies have shown that drinking 8 ounces of low-calorie cranberry juice every day can increase the HDL cholesterol, which can lower your risk of heart disease.
- Help improve blood vessel function in people who have atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).
- Protect against some types of cancer. The flavonoids (the pigment that gives cranberries its deep red color) in whole cranberries (and not cranberry juice) have been shown to help prevent certain types of cancers, including lung, cervical, prostate, breast and colon cancer.
- Prevent plaque build-up on teeth. A compound in cranberries has been found to prevent plaque from sticking on teeth. This reduces the risk of gum disease and tooth decay.
- Are fat- and sodium-free. One-half a cup of whole cranberries contains 30 calories, 2.5 grams of fiber and is a good source of vitamin C.

Fresh cranberries, followed by dried cranberries, retain the most antioxidants; bottled cranberry drinks and cranberry cocktails contain the least. Choose fresh, plump cranberries, deep red in color and very firm to the touch. The darker red and fully ripened cranberries have higher flavonoid content and, therefore, deliver the most antioxidant benefits.

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