The Fit Food Fruit: 7 Benefits Of Avocado For A Long, Healthy Life

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Avocados have become America's "new favorite fruit" for men and women alike. Whether eaten in raw slices with salt and pepper or mashed up in guacamole, there's a myriad of benefits in every bite. It does more than just satisfy America's appetite for the creamy fit fruit, eating avocados can lead to living a longer, healthier life.

America's love affair with avocados is here to stay as it invades the kitchens and restaurant menus all across the country. According to the Hass Avocado Board, avocados have risen in popularity for the

past 15 years, with the sales of Hass avocados making up more than 95 percent of all avocados consumed in the U.S. Fast food chains, including Burger King, Au Bon Pain, Panera Bread Co., have tried to capitalize on the ingredient's popularity offering more options with avocado, but consumers should be wary of "healthy" avocado dishes that are anything but. **ADVERTISING**

Franci Cohen, board certified personal trainer and nutritionist in New York, warned the dangers of thinking all avocado used as an ingredient is healthy. "When eaten right, avocado has great nutritional value for your diet," she told Medical Daily in an email. "But the problem is that many people see the ingredient 'avocado' and immediately think the dish is healthy, when it's actually full of fattening ingredients as well."

Although avocados have a high fat content, it's a nutrient all-star and a great source of potassium, omega-3 fatty acids, and lutein. It also contains good amounts of soluble and insoluble fiber. If you're looking to increase your avocado consumption, here are several health reasons to eat an avocado a day and every day.

1. Absorbs Other Nutrients

Avocado has a rich fat content that makes it easier to absorb fat solubles such as vitamins A, K, D, and E, which means that they need to be taken with fat in order to be absorbed. Adding this creamy fruit to any vegetable dense meals will help you get all of the vitamins of your food. Without fat in your diet, the body would not be able to absorb the fat-soluble vitamins in that meal.

Marci Clow, a MS, RDN at <u>Rainbow Light</u> told Medical Daily in an email: "Because of the fat content in avocados, they will facilitate absorption of fat-soluble nutrients (vitamins A, D, E & K) when combined with foods containing those nutrients."

2. Eases Arthritis Symptoms

Avocados contain phytosterols, carotenoid antioxidants, omega 3 fatty acids and polyhydroxolated fatty alcohols, which make the fruit an anti-inflammatory agent. Dr. Matthew Brennecke, a board certified naturopathic doctor practicing at the Rocky Mountain Wellness Clinic in Fort Collins, Colo., believes avocados can help with arthritis and osteoarthritis-related pain via avocado soybean unsaponifiables (ASU), an extract that increases collagen synthesis that is an anti-inflammatory agent. "We've seen that a natural vegetable extract made with soybean and avocado oil will slow down the advancement of osteoarthritis," Brennecke told Medical Daily in an email.

3. Reduces Risk of Certain Cancers

Avocados possesses a mix of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory characteristics, which makes it able to combat certain cancers including mouth, skin, and prostate. A 2007 <u>study</u> published in the journal Seminars in Cancer Biology found the phytochemicals in avocados can selectively induce cell cycle arrest, inhibit growth, and induce apoptosis in precancerous and cancer cell lines. In other words, it is the phytochemicals in this fruit that encourage cancer cells to stop growing and die out.

The consumption of avocado can also be beneficial during chemotherapy. These sessions often drain the body out of gluthathione — a powerful antioxidant source — but avocado can help. "Avocados contain rich sources of both vitamin E and glutathione, and if chemotherapy is reducing your glutathione storage supply, avocados are a great way to get that antioxidant back into yoursystem," said Brennecke. He added: "A low supply of gluthathione can make the healthy cells vulnerable to chemotherapy damage."

4. Lowers Cholesterol

The super fruit is filled with fats that are good for you, specifically monounsaturated fat, which helps to lower bad cholesterol. This is because avocados are high in beta-sitosterol, according to Cohen, which is a compound that lowers blood cholesterol levels. "If you worry about your body's cholesterol levels, avocados are a great solution because they will actually lower your LDL and increase your HDL levels," she said.

A 1996 <u>study</u> published in the journal Archives of Medical Research found patients with high cholesterol who added avocados to their diet for one week had a 22 percent decrease in bad cholesterol and triglycerides and an 11 percent increase in good cholesterol. It also improved cholesterol for people who already had good lipid levels, but were shown to be more effective in people with mild cholesterol problems.

5. Boosts Eye Health

An ounce of avocado contain 81 micrograms of lutein, along with zeaxanthin, two phytonutrients which are essential to eye health. Lutein and zeaxanthin are carotenoids, according to Clow, which act as antioxidants in the eye lowering risk of developing age-related eye conditions. Adding avocados to your daily diet can protect the tissues of the eye from sun damage and the formation

of cataracts and macular degeneration. It is the fat content in avocado that helps the body absorb the carotenoid.

6. Boosts Heart Health

The mono- and polyunsaturated fats in avocados not only help reduce blood cholesterol levels, but they help decrease the overall risk for heart disease. Avocado's high vitamin B6 and folic acid content helps to regulate homocysteine levels, according to Cohen, which is what reduces the risk. A 2013 study published Nutrition Journal found avocados were associated with a reduced risk of metabolic syndrome, a group of symptoms shown to increase the risk of stroke, coronary artery disease, and diabetes. Overall, avocado consumption is associated with improved diet quality, nutrient intake, and good heart health.

7. Promotes Weight Loss

Avocado's smooth and creamy texture actually contains six to seven grams of fiber for half of a medium sized fruit. Its rich fiber content can help you feel full faster and longer, making it a go-to weight loss aid and help your metabolic health. "Additionally, 75% of the fat in an avocado is unsaturated which makes it a great substitute for foods high in saturated fat plus the oleic acid, one of the unsaturated fatty acids, may help to activate the satiety center in your brain that makes you feel full," Clow said.

The benefits of this naturally nutrient-dense fruit will help you stay healthy and live longer.