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Avocados are a creamy, buttery fruit grown in warm climates and often enjoyed in Mexican and South American cuisine. Also known as an alligator pear or butter fruit, the versatile avocado is the only fruit that provides a substantial amount of monounsaturated fat (the healthy kind). Avocados are a naturally nutrient-dense food and contain nearly 20 vitamins and minerals.

Consuming fruits and vegetables of all kinds has long been associated with a reduced risk of many lifestyle-related health conditions. Many studies have suggested that increasing consumption of plant foods like avocados decreases the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and overall mortality while promoting a healthy complexion and hair, increased energy and overall lower weight.

Health Benefits

Healthy for the heart:

According to registered dietitian Patricia Groziak, MS, RD, with the Hass Avocado Board, avocados contain 25 milligrams per ounce of a natural plant sterol called beta-sitosterol. Regular consumption of beta-sitosterol and other plant sterols are recommended for their ability to help maintain healthy cholesterol levels.

Great for vision:

Avocados contain lutein and zeaxanthin, two phytochemicals that are essential to eye health. These two carotenoids act as antioxidants in the eye and can minimize the damage and reduce the risk of developing age-related macular degeneration.



Healthy Foods

Health Benefits: Avocados

Osteoporosis prevention:

Vitamin K is often overshadowed by calcium and vitamin D when thinking of nutrients important for maintaining healthy bones, however, eating a diet with adequate vitamin K may be just as important. Vitamin K can improve bone health by increasing calcium absorption and reducing urinary excretion of calcium. Low intakes of vitamin K have been associated with a higher risk of bone fracture. One-half of an avocado provides approximately 25% of the daily-recommended intake for vitamin K.

Cancer fighter:

Low levels of folate have been shown to increase the risk of breast cancer in women. Adequate intake of dietary folate (from food, not necessarily supplements) has also shown promise in protecting against colon, stomach, pancreatic and cervical cancers. Although the mechanism of protection is currently unknown, researchers believe that folate's protective effects have something to do with its role in DNA and RNA production and the prevention of unwanted mutations. One-half of an avocado provides approximately 20% of the daily-recommended intake for folate.

Healthy babies:

Folate is also extremely important for pregnant women. Adequate intake protects against miscarriage and neural tube defects. Recent research has also shown that a father's folate status before conception may be just as important. In a study from McGill University, paternal folate deficiency in mice was associated with a 30% higher number of various birth defects than in offspring with no paternal folate deficiencies.

Lowered risk of depression:

Another benefit of foods with high levels of folate is a lowered risk of depression. Folate helps to prevent an excess of homocysteine forming in the body, which can block blood and other nutrients from reaching the brain. Excess homocysteine can interfere with the production of the feel-good hormones serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, which regulate not only mood, but sleep and appetite as well.

Improved digestion:

Despite its creamy texture, an avocado is actually high in fiber, with approximately 6-7 grams per half fruit. Eating foods with natural fiber can prevent constipation, maintain a healthy digestive tract and lower the risk of colon cancer.

Natural detoxification:

Adequate fiber promotes regularity, which is crucial for the daily excretion of toxins through the bile and stool. Recent studies have shown that dietary fiber may also play a role in regulating the immune system and reducing inflammation.

Protection from chronic disease:

According to the Department of Internal Medicine and Nutritional Sciences Program of the University of Kentucky, high fiber intakes are associated with significantly lower risks of developing coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and certain gastrointestinal diseases. Increased fiber intake has also been shown to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, improve insulin sensitivity, and enhance weight loss for obese individuals.