



Taken from: www.nutrition-and-you.com/dates.html

What nutrients are there in the dates? A lot indeed! Here are sweet, delicious fruits from the tropical oasis, brimming with much-needed minerals and energy to help you stay fit and healthy.

Botanically; they are the fruits grow on the palm tree belonging to the family of *Areceaceae*, in the genus: *Phoenix*, and scientifically named as *Phoenix dactylifera*. The tree is believed to originate in the lands on the banks of Nile and Euphrates Rivers of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Date palm is now grown extensively for its edible fruits under warmer climates across all the continents.

The date fruit is a "drupe", in which its outer fleshy part (exocarp and mesocarp) surrounds a shell (the pit or stone) of hardened endocarp with a seed inside. The fruit is oval to cylindrical in shape, 3–7 cms long, and 2–3 cms diameter, and ripe dates range from golden-yellow, amber, bright-red to deep-brown depending on the cultivar type.

There are many varieties of date palm cultivated. 'Amir Hajj', 'Saidy', 'Khadrawy' and 'Medjool' are some of the important varieties popular for their rich taste, flavor, and superior quality.

Health Benefits

- Wonderfully delicious, dates are one of the most popular fruits packed with an impressive list of essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that are required for normal growth, development and overall well-being.



Healthy Foods

Health Benefits: Dates

- Fresh dates compose of soft, easily digestible flesh and simple sugars like fructose and dextrose. 100 g of mejdool dates hold 277 calories. When eaten, they replenish energy and revitalize the body instantly. For these qualities, they are being served to break the fast during Ramadan month since ancient times.
- The fruit is rich in dietary fiber, which prevents LDL cholesterol absorption in the gut. Additionally, the fiber works as a bulk laxative. It, thus, helps to protect the colon mucous membrane from cancer-causing chemicals binding to it in the colon.
- They contain health benefiting flavonoid polyphenolic antioxidants known as tannins. Tannins are known to possess anti-infective, anti-inflammatory, and anti-hemorrhagic (prevent easy bleeding tendencies) properties.
- They are moderate sources of vitamin-A (contains 149 IU per 100 g), which is known to have antioxidant properties and essential for vision. Additionally, it is also required maintaining healthy mucus membranes and skin. Consumption of natural fruits rich in vitamin A is known to help protect from lung and oral cavity cancers.
- They compose antioxidant flavonoids such as β -carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin. These antioxidants found to have the ability to protect cells and other structures in the body from harmful effects of oxygen-free radicals. Thus, eating dates found to offer some protection from colon, prostate, breast, endometrial, lung, and pancreatic cancers.
- Zeaxanthin is an important dietary carotenoid that selectively absorbed into the retinal macula lutea, where it thought to provide antioxidant and protective light-filtering functions. It thus offers protection against age-related macular degeneration, especially in elderly populations.
- Dates are an excellent source of iron, carry 0.90 mg/100 g of fruits (about 11% of RDI). Iron, being a component of hemoglobin inside the red blood cells, determines the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood.
- Further, they are an excellent sources of potassium. 100 g contains 696 mg or 16% of daily-recommended levels of this electrolyte. Potassium is an important component of cell and body fluids that help regulate heart rate and blood pressure. They, thus, offers protection against stroke and coronary heart diseases.
- Date fruits are also rich in minerals like calcium, manganese, copper, and magnesium. Calcium is an important mineral that is an essential constituent of bone and teeth, and required by the body for muscle contraction, blood clotting, and nerve impulse conduction. Manganese is used by the body as a co-factor for the antioxidant enzyme, *superoxide dismutase*. Copper is required for the production of red blood cells. Magnesium is essential for bone growth.
- Further, the fruit has moderate levels of B-complex group of vitamins as well as vitamin K. It contains very good amounts of pyridoxine (vitamin B-6), niacin, pantothenic acid, and riboflavin. These vitamins are acting as cofactors help body metabolize carbohydrates, protein, and fats. Vitamin K is essential for many coagulant factors in the blood as well as in bone metabolism.