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It is often said that the key to getting an adequate amount of vitamins and minerals in the diet is to eat a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables - the more color, the better. However, this philosophy tends to leave potatoes in the dark. In many cases, if a food lacks color, it also lacks necessary nutrients. However, potatoes prove quite the contrary. The humble potato is vastly underrated in terms of nutritional benefits. Due to the increased interest in foods that are low-carb or low-glycemic index, the potato has unjustly earned a bad reputation because of its starchy makeup, leading many to believe that it should be cut out of the diet altogether. What many people do not realize is that this nutrient-dense tuber is packed with a variety of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals that ward off disease and benefit human health.

### **Health Benefits**

#### **Bone health:**

The iron, phosphorous, calcium, magnesium and zinc in potatoes all contribute to the building and maintaining of bone structure and strength. Iron and zinc play crucial roles in the production and maturation of collagen. Though phosphorus and calcium are both important in bone structure, the careful balance of the two minerals is necessary for proper bone mineralization - consumption of too much phosphorus with too little calcium intake can result in bone loss.

#### **Blood pressure:**

Maintaining a low sodium intake is essential to lowering blood pressure, however increasing potassium intake may be just as important because of its vasodilation effects. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination



## Healthy Foods

## Health Benefits: Potatoes

Survey, fewer than 2% of US adults meet the daily 4700 mg recommendation. In addition, potassium, calcium and magnesium (all present in the humble potato) have been found naturally to decrease blood pressure.

### **Heart health:**

The potato's fiber, potassium, vitamin C and vitamin B-6 content, coupled with its lack of cholesterol, all support heart health. Potatoes contain significant amounts of fiber, which helps lower the total amount of cholesterol in the blood, thereby decreasing the risk of heart disease. In one study, those who consumed 4069 mg of potassium per day had a 49% lower risk of death from ischemic heart disease compared to those who consumed less potassium (about 1000 mg per day). Vitamin B-6 prevents the buildup of a compound known as homocysteine. When excessive amounts of homocysteine accumulate in the body, it can damage blood vessels and lead to heart problems.

### **Inflammation:**

Choline is a very important and versatile nutrient in potatoes that helps with sleep, muscle movement, learning and memory. Choline also helps to maintain the structure of cellular membranes, aids in the transmission of nerve impulses, assists in the absorption of fat and reduces chronic inflammation.

### **Cancer:**

Potatoes contain folate, which plays a role in DNA synthesis and repair, thus preventing the formation of cancer cells from mutations in the DNA. Fiber intake from fruits and vegetables like potatoes are associated with a lowered risk of colorectal cancer. Vitamin C and quercetin function as powerful antioxidants that help protect cells against free radical damage.

### **Digestion and regularity:**

Because of their fiber content, potatoes help to prevent constipation and promote regularity for a healthy digestive tract.

### **Weight management and satiety:**

Dietary fibers are commonly recognized as important factors in weight management and loss by functioning as "bulking agents" in the digestive system. These compounds increase satiety and reduce appetite, making you feel fuller for longer and thereby lowering your overall calorie intake.

### **Metabolism:**

Potatoes are a great source of vitamin B-6, which plays a vital role in energy metabolism by breaking down carbohydrates and proteins into glucose and amino acids. These smaller compounds are more easily utilized for energy within the body.

### **Skin:**

Collagen, the skin's support system, relies on vitamin C as an essential nutrient that works in our bodies as an antioxidant to help prevent damage caused by the sun, pollution and smoke. Vitamin C also promotes collagen's ability to smooth wrinkles and improve overall skin texture.