

Avocados

Six Heart-Smart Reasons to Eat an Avocado

Avocados are among the healthiest of choices for those looking to not only improve their overall heart health, but add fiber, plant-based protein, and other essential nutrients to their diet. Here are six reasons to make the versatile avocado your new favorite fruit.

Gives bad fats the brush-off.

Your body needs some fat – but only the good kind, like monounsaturated and some polyunsaturated fats. About two-thirds of the fat in an avocado is monounsaturated fat, the same heart-healthy kind found in olive oil. Avocados are also a good source of vitamin E. Just remember, avocados do contain some saturated fat. Eat them in moderation and in place of other high-fat foods, such as butter, cheese, and sour cream.

Helps conquer bad cholesterol.

Several studies have shown that avocados can improve cholesterol levels. When avocados were eaten as a main source of monounsaturated fat in an otherwise low-fat diet, bad LDL cholesterol levels went down and good HDL cholesterol went up. In fact, adding avocados to your weekly menu may be better for your cholesterol than loading up on complex carbohydrates, like starches and fiber.

The secret may lie in the large amounts of linoleic and linolenic acids in avocados. You can only get these two polyunsaturated fatty acids from your diet, yet they are necessary for important circulatory functions, like controlling blood pressure, blood clotting, and blood fat levels. One avocado provides more than half your daily requirement of linoleic acid.

Increases folic acid.

Avocados are a particularly good source of folic acid. This B vitamin neutralizes the bad effects of homocysteine, a byproduct of protein metabolism that damages and narrows your arteries.

Folic acid is found in many plant foods, although much of it is destroyed during cooking or processing. Since avocados are usually eaten raw, they provide a healthy dose of folic acid, as well as many other B vitamins.

Beefs up antioxidants.

This tasty fruit is high in lots of vitamins, especially C and E, two important weapons against free radicals. By working as antioxidants, vitamins C and E keep free radicals from reacting with the cholesterol in your blood. As a result, the cholesterol is less likely to attach to the walls of your arteries and form plaque.

Boosts fiber intake.

If you're looking to add fiber to your diet, avocados provide a delicious alternative. One medium avocado has more fiber than almost any other fruit – nearly five grams. That's about as much fiber as you'll get in a cup of bran cereal. Fiber helps your body get rid of cholesterol before it has a chance to do any damage.

Maximizes your minerals.

If you're looking for a great source of minerals, look no further than this wrinkled wonder. Avocados are a great source of iron, magnesium, manganese, and copper. And don't forget potassium, a mineral that's extremely important to good heart health. One avocado contains twice as much potassium as a banana.