13 Surprising Health Benefits of Eating Cherries

Are you ready to wake up your wellness routine with a cherry bomb of benefits? Unbeknownst to many, cherries are the little fruit packing big bonuses for your health.

Beyond their symbolic nature of topping ice cream sundaes or adorning a Shirley Temple, cherries come loaded with nutrients and bioactive compounds that address various health concerns. As folks increasingly look for natural ways to support their health, why not explore some underdogs of the food world?

We reviewed numerous scientific studies and turned to nutrition experts to curate our list of unexpected cherry benefits. Each benefit is backed by research that supports and explains the impact of cherries on your health.

1. Cherries Are Nutrient-Rich

Cherries are small, tasty, and jam-packed with essential nutrients. According to the USDA, sweet cherries are a great source of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. One cup of cherries provides 16% of your daily vitamin C and 9% of your daily potassium needs.

These nutrients work together to keep your body functioning. Vitamin C boosts your immune system, potassium helps regulate blood pressure, and fiber aids digestion. With such a nutrient profile, cherries are a superfood you don't want to miss out on.

2. Cherries Contain Tons of Antioxidants

Blueberries step aside—there's a new kid on the block. Cherries contain tons of antioxidants, which are fantastic for preventing cellular damage and minimizing your chances of dealing with chronic health problems such as cancer and heart disease. The dark red color of cherries is a telltale sign of the antioxidant anthocyanins, known for their numerous health benefits.

Research shows that the antioxidants in cherries can delay aging by protecting your cells from free radicals. These unstable molecules can damage cells, contribute to aging, and nurture various diseases. By including cherries in your diet, you're satisfying your sweet tooth and doing a favor for your long-term health.

3. Cherries Lower Cholesterol Naturally

Cherries might be better at lowering cholesterol than digging into your daily bowl of Cheerios. Some research suggests that the high levels of anthocyanins in cherries can positively impact your overall cholesterol levels — good and bad.

One study found that participants consuming anthocyanin-rich foods, like cherries, increased HDL (good) cholesterol while decreasing LDL (bad) cholesterol. This dual-action cholesterol tamer makes cherries a heart-healthy choice. So, throw a few cherries into your diet, and you can put a nice spin on your next cholesterol test.

4. Cherries Can Turn That Frown Upside Down

Do the skyrocketing rates of inflation have you feeling blue? Maybe you're struggling with Ellen Degeneres retiring from entertainment. Either way, grab a handful of cherries and bring a little relief to your woes. Cherries are a natural source of serotonin, a hormone that regulates mood and anxiety.

Cherries also contain the amino acid tryptophan, which helps produce serotonin. This is the same compound in turkey that makes you feel relaxed after a big Thanksgiving meal. Next time you're stressed or anxious, try reaching for cherries instead of raiding the snack aisle. They offer a healthier way to lift your spirits.

5. Cherries Are Natural Brain Boosters

Toss aside that diabolical Rubix cube and make a B-line for the clamshell of fresh cherries. Besides being good for your heart, cherries are a boon for your brain. The anthocyanins in cherries can improve cognitive function and protect against neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's.

In addition to anthocyanins, cherries contain polyphenols that aid in processing new information. Studies suggest that these compounds can enhance memory and learning capabilities. By munching on cherries, your brain is getting the nutrients it requires to remain focused and sharp.

6. Cherries Can Help You Catch Some Z's

Are you popping melatonin gummies at a disturbingly rapid rate to get some quality sleep each night? Cherries might give you the same experience as popping an Ambien but without the 2 am solo chili cook-off in your kitchen. They're actually one of the few fruits packed with the hormanone melatonin, which regulates sleep-wake cycles.

Studies reveal that ingesting tart cherry juice can improve sleep quality and duration, making falling and staying asleep easier. The tryptophan in cherries also helps increase melatonin levels, further promoting restful sleep.

7. Cherries Contain Anti-Inflammatory Properties

Cherries are a natural anti-inflammatory and contain compounds that reduce inflammation and mitigate symptoms of conditions like gout and arthritis. Studies reveal that sweet cherries can lower the circulating concentrations of inflammation markers in healthy men and women.

Cherries' anti-inflammatory properties work similarly to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) but without the potential side effects. So, you can sort of think of them as the ibuprofen of the fruit world.

8. Cherries May Have Cancer Prevention Properties

One of the cherries' lesser-known talents is its ability to thwart cancer. Some research suggests that cherries may play a role in cancer prevention by reducing inflammation and oxidative stress. Compounds found in sweet cherries, such as phenolic acids and flavonoids, have inhibited the growth of cancer cells in lab tests.

These compounds target specific cellular pathways to promote the death of cancer cells and prevent their spread. While more research is needed, the initial findings are encouraging. Their rich antioxidant content also helps neutralize free radicals, reducing the potential for cancer development or cell damage.

9. Cherries Support Gut Health

Your digestive system will give you a big high five for eating cherries. One cup of cherries contains 2.9 grams of fiber, which helps nurture your gut's beneficial bacteria. It's part of the microbiome balancing act that helps keep things moving along.

Keeping your gut health is vital for overall well-being, impacting everything from immune function to digestion. By adding cherries to your diet, you're supporting your gut health in multiple ways.

10. Cherries Can Improve Your Body's Cardiovascular Performace

Heart disease continues to be a leading cause of death, but cherries can help keep your heart and cardiovascular system performing well. The polyphenols and potassium in cherries reduce your chances of developing heart disease and can lower blood pressure.

One study reveals that women with diabetes who added cherry concentrate to their diet experienced a significant reduction in blood pressure. This is likely due to the combined effects of polyphenols and potassium, which help relax blood vessels and improve blood flow.

11. Cherries Can Help Manage Diabetes

Living with diabetes is no walk in the park, and folks with the disease are always on the lookout for foods that they can safely consume. It turns out that cherries fit the mold.

Some studies suggest that cherries help regulate blood glucose levels, making them a good choice for people with diabetes. The anthocyanins in cherries might also influence insulin production, helping to stabilize blood sugar levels.

12. Cherries Could Help You Drop a Few Pounds

If you want to shed a few pounds, cherries can be a great addition to your weight loss plan. They are low in calories but high in essential nutrients like vitamins and antioxidants. Their high water content also helps keep you hydrated and full, reducing the temptation to snack on unhealthy foods.

However, the real kicker in the battle against bulging belt loops comes from an unlikely source—melatonin. When we think of melatonin, we think of sleep, but studies on obese rats show that the hormone also helps control weight.

13. Cherries Help You Recover From Workouts

While grabbing a Tootsie Roll on the way out of the gym is a nice reward for sweating it out, cherries might actually be a better option. Studies suggest that the blend of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds in cherries helps reduce muscle soreness and speed up recovery after intense exercise.

Tart cherry juice is rich in polyphenols, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory agents that can expedite recovery from strength training. It can also reduce muscle soreness and curb muscle damage. Some research even indicates that it might boost endurance during exercise by improving oxygen supply to muscles.