

Health Benefits of Blueberries

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Blueberries—#1 Superfood

Everyone knows that fruits and vegetables are ‘good for you’, but not everyone would be able to say why.

Full of essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamin C, A and E, as well as potassium, calcium and magnesium, blueberries are an exceptionally sweet and delicious way for Canadians to achieve the Canada Food Guide recommendations to eat seven to 10 servings of fruit or vegetables every day. A 250 ml (1 cup) serving of blueberries – about the size of a tennis ball, contains 3.6 grams of dietary fibre, virtually no fat, and just 80 calories.

Over the years, a great deal of research has sought to uncover the properties that make fruits and vegetables nature’s best weapon against disease. By the 1990’s, all eyes turned towards antioxidants. Antioxidants help neutralize harmful-by products in the body called ‘free-radicals’ that may lead to cancer and other age-related and degenerative illnesses.

Researchers who ranked the antioxidant potential of 40 fresh fruits and vegetables found blueberries at the top of the list, thus earning the nickname, ‘#1 superfood’. This is due to the blueberries high content of polyphenols, the same types of compounds that provide the health benefits found in red wine and dark chocolate. In blueberries, the polyphenol that has most excited scientists is the same one that gives the blueberry its distinctive and wholly unique blue colour, a pigment called ‘anthocyanin’.¹

More recently, research has revealed additional anti-inflammatory benefits of the polyphenols that appear to greatly increase the disease-fighting power of the blueberry. Both antioxidant and the anti-inflammatory actions of polyphenols have been linked to a wide range of health benefits and improved treatment outcomes in a large number of age-related illnesses, including brain diseases such as Alzheimer’s² and Parkinson’s disease³, cardiovascular illnesses such as ischemic stroke⁴; metabolic syndrome, a frequent precursor to heart disease, stroke and diabetes⁵; and improved urinary tract health.⁶

¹ Prior, R.L., et.al. J Agric Food Chem 1998, 46:2686-2693; Wu, X. et.al. J Agric Food Chem 2004, 52:4026-37.

² Joseph, J. A. et al. Nutr Neurosci. 2003, 6:153-62.

³ McGuire, S.O., et al. Nutr. Neuroscience, 2006, 9:251-258.

⁴ Sweeney, M.I. et al. Nutr Neurosci 2002, 5:427-31.

⁵ Seymour, M. et al. FASEB J. 2009, 23:563.31.)

⁶ Schmidt, B.M. et al. J Agric Food Chem. 2004, 52, 6433-42.



For more information and images, please contact

Wendy Underwood
Fever Pitch Marketing Communications
T: 604.418.5253
E: wendy@feverpitchcommunications.com

Kate Colley
T: 604.644.7976
E: kate@katecolley.com

Media site: www.bcblueberry.com/site/media