

Vail Daily

Vail Natural Health: The health benefits of berries

Vail Natural Health: Fresh berries can do wonders to normalize and improve health

OCTOBER, 19 2009
DEBORAH WIANCEK
VAIL, CO COLORADO

This has been a wonderful year for fresh berries. Not only do they taste great, but they are densely packed with a variety of potent phytochemicals that can do wonders to normalize and improve health. There is a reason why bears love berries. These benefits are primarily due to anthocyanins, the water-soluble pigments in the plants. They are responsible for the red, purple and blue colors in fruits and vegetables. Dark berries and fruits such as red grape, aronia berry, elderberry, blueberry, red raspberry and pomegranate contain anthocyanins. Studies have shown anthocyanins in berries have a wide range of biological activities including: Enhancing over all immune function, reducing inflammation, lowering our risk for cancer, fostering eye health, protecting nerve function, reducing LDL – bad cholesterol, improving blood flow, protecting our skin from wrinkles and preventing diabetes.

Anthocyanins are free radical scavengers. In other words, they protect our cells from damage that results in cancer and auto-immune disease. Pomegranate juice has two to three times the antioxidant capacity of either red wine or green tea. Red grape juice increased plasma antioxidant activity more than red wine. Studies show that blueberry reduced risk of many chronic degenerative diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

The anthocyanins in blueberry are very useful in treating a wide variety of inflammatory conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis, chronic progressive polyarthritis and gout (due to reduction of uric acid levels and tissue destruction). Blueberries contain vitamins A and C, zinc, potassium, iron, calcium and magnesium, and are high in fiber and low in calories. Studies show that blueberry reduced the risk of many chronic degenerative diseases such as diabetes, macular degeneration and heart disease by increasing the antioxidant effects.

Elderberry inhibited all strains of flu virus tested. It seems to stop the replication of the virus and to result in higher levels of antibodies against the virus. Resveratrol in red grapes has demonstrated the ability to protect the heart and lower our risk for cancer.

Dr. Bill Mitchell, founder of Bastyr University and my mentor, conducted clinical research on berry anthocyanins for more than 20 years. His research found that anthocyanins can prevent heart disease, arterial disease such as phlebitis and varicose veins, diabetes, macular degeneration, peripheral edema, emphysema and trigeminal neuralgia.

Including berries in your diet is a great way to prevent many chronic diseases, but they are not a substitute for diet and lifestyle changes needed to prevent disease. You can get the benefits of anthocyanins by eating a half cup of blueberries and/or raspberries a day or drinking a cup of sugar-free grape or pomegranate juice a day. We carry Dr. Mitchell's organic fruit anthocyanins formula blend containing red grape, aronia berry, elderberry, blueberry, red raspberry and pomegranate. If you are interested in any of the research studies on anthocyanins, e-mail me at wiancek@healthref.com.

Dr. Deborah Wiancek is a naturopathic physician practicing at The Riverwalk Natural Health Clinic and Natural Pharmacy LLC. For more information, visit her Web site at www.healthref.com, e-mail her at wiancek@healthref.com or call the clinic at 970-926-7606.

<http://www.vaildaily.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091019/AE/910199986&parentprofile=search&template=printart>