

Studies Show that Pomegranates Provide many Health Benefits

By Michael Ravensthorpe, *Natural News*

The pomegranate is one of the world's oldest known fruits and has long been considered a symbol of health and fertility in its native Persia (modern-day Iran). It is also one of the most interesting fruits to consume: After splitting apart the pomegranate's tough outer layer, a complex chamber of red seeds lies before you. These small seeds (and their juice) are the only part of the pomegranate that is edible, but -- as numerous studies prove -- their nutritional value is considerably greater than what you might expect.

Research into pomegranates

Protection from skin cancer -- According to a study published in *Experimental Dermatology* in June 2009, pomegranate juice and oils can protect our skin from solar radiation, thereby guarding us from skin cancer associated with excessive sun exposure. The researchers ascribe this result to the anthocyanins and tannins present in pomegranates, which provide impressive antioxidant and anti-tumor properties. (1) These same properties also provide anti-aging benefits, and can shield us from degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and rheumatoid arthritis.

Anti-inflammatory properties -- A study published in the *Journal of Inflammation* in January 2009 found that pomegranate juice can inhibit the inflammatory activity of excess mast cells. (Mast cells are naturally found in the body and play important protective roles but can become an aggressive, inflammatory force when imbalanced.) Again, the researchers ascribe this result to pomegranates' concentrations of naturally occurring antioxidants. (2)

Reduce cholesterol -- Studies have shown that the regular consumption of pomegranates and pomegranate juice can reduce LDL cholesterol in both animals and humans. One study featured in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* in 2000, for instance, discovered that pomegranate juice helped inhibit the oxidation of LDL cholesterol in human subjects. (3) Excess LDL cholesterol is one of the biggest contributors to coronary heart diseases, which is the most common type of heart disease in the United States.

Mood booster -- There's a good reason why many people feel better after eating a pomegranate: They contain a large number of phytochemicals that stimulate estrogen and serotonin receptors in the body, thereby boosting our mood and reducing feelings of sadness and depression. Research even suggests that long-term consumption of pomegranates and pomegranate products could regulate serotonin levels in the brain, potentially treating low moods caused by chemical imbalances. (4)

High in nutrients -- Pomegranates are surprisingly rich in nutrients. In fact, their seeds contain more fiber and minerals than many other more popular fruits. For example, one whole pomegranate contains around 11 grams of dietary fiber (twice the amount of fiber of an average-sized banana), 29 milligrams of vitamin C and 46 micrograms of vitamin K. (5) In all three instances, these numbers average at about 50 percent of our recommended daily intake.

Selecting the best pomegranates

Like all fruits, pomegranates are best eaten raw for maximum health benefits. When purchasing them, select organic pomegranates that feel heavy for their size and radiate a vibrant, unblemished skin. These are the best-quality pomegranates and can be refrigerated for up to two months without having their nutritional value compromised.

Sources for this article include:

(1) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>

(2) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>

(3) <http://ajcn.nutrition.org>

(4) <http://www.drfuhrman.com>

(5) <http://nutritiondata.self.com>

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