

# The Top 4 Healing Properties of Avocados

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***Not only is avocado an exceptionally dense source of good fats, vitamins, and antioxidants, but it offers protection against some of the worst degenerative diseases known to humanity.***

Avocados are one of the simplest and most satisfying ways to add a nutritional superfood to your diet. Avocados provide essential dietary fiber, and vitamins and minerals such as copper, folate, potassium, **vitamins K, E, and C**, to name only a few. Considered a seed fruit, avocados are unique in that nearly 80% of their total calories come from fat, a significantly higher percentage than is found in other fruits. Nutritionally dense, one-third of a medium-size avocado has 80 calories as well as the recommended daily allowance of fat for most Americans.<sup>[1]</sup>

Thought to have originated in Mexico, the modern **avocado** tree spread throughout Central and South America as far back as 10,000 years ago. Varieties of the tree are now grown in Mediterranean and tropical climates around the globe. Besides the delicious boost avocados provide to your daily nutrient intake, this fatty fruit touts an impressive catalog of **scientifically-backed health benefits**. Here are five of the top reasons to add avocados to your life!

## **Protection from cardiovascular disease**

One of the first things many medical professionals prescribe when a patient is at risk for heart disease are dietary interventions aimed at reducing fat intake. Despite this conventional “wisdom”, the high-**fat** avocado is among the most **heart-friendly of all foods**. A 2012 study conducted at UCLA Center for Human Nutrition observed the

bodily effects of eating a plain hamburger—considered an offender on the heart-healthy food list—as compared to the effects of eating a hamburger with a large slice of avocado added to the meal. Eleven healthy subjects were fed each of these two meals on two different occasions, after which researchers measured the constriction of blood vessels, or vasoconstriction, a factor indicating states of high blood pressure. **The plain hamburger meal resulted in significant vasoconstriction, demonstrating an unhealthy effect on blood pressure, whereas the avocado-topped hamburger meal had no effect on blood pressure at all. Avocado had the effect of neutralizing this negative effect.**

Next, researchers analyzed blood cells and found two distinct markers for **inflammation** after the meal of hamburger only, while these markers were noticeably absent in the blood after the meal including avocado. Finally, researchers found that post-meal fatty triglycerides, high concentrations of which indicate an elevated risk of stroke, did not raise in the avocado group despite the additional fat, whereas these markers did increase in the plain hamburger group. **Researchers concluded that eating avocado can have beneficial anti-inflammatory and vascular health effects.**

Well-controlled studies are lacking on just how helpful eating avocados can be for **reducing cardiovascular disease risk factors**. In 2015, a group of researchers sought to close this knowledge gap by recording the effects of three different diets on 45 overweight or obese participants with high cholesterol (LDL-C). All three diets were designed to lower LDL-C, consisting of no more than 7% saturated fatty acids (SFA) among the total daily fat intake. Participants consumed one of three diets: a lower-fat diet (24% fat); a moderate-fat diet (34% fat) including one fresh Hass avocado (136 g) per day; or a moderate-fat diet (34% fat) using high oleic acid oils to match the fatty acid content of one avocado. All three diets provided similar foods—save for the difference in fats—and were matched for macronutrients and fatty acid content. Compared with baseline measurements taken at the start of the study, the reduction in LDL-C and HDL cholesterol was greater on the avocado diet than either of the other two diets. Furthermore, only the avocado diet significantly decreased LDL particle number, small dense LDL cholesterol, and the ratio of LDL/HDL from baseline. Researchers concluded that the inclusion of one avocado per day is a great way to lower cholesterol as part of a moderate-fat, cholesterol-lowering diet. Their praise for avocados did not stop there: **“Our results demonstrate that avocados have beneficial effects on cardio-metabolic risk factors that extend beyond their heart-healthy fatty acid profile.”**

## **Helps prevent diabetes**

When it comes to diabetes, medical science views the two most common types, Type-1 and Type-2, very differently. **Type-2**, or adult-onset diabetes, is widely acknowledged as a disease of lifestyle, with diet-based interventions accepted as the most effective remedy. Characterized by the latent inability of the body to produce enough insulin, a **Type-1** diabetic inherits or develops the condition due to damaged or destroyed pancreatic beta cells—the cells responsible for insulin production. Unlike Type-2 diabetes where the body becomes resistant to its own insulin, Type-1 diabetes can onset due to one or more of various potential causes: autoimmune issues, bacterial or viral infections, incompatible foods in the diet, and chemical exposures, to name but a

few major triggers. Considered an incurable disease, Type-1 diabetes must currently be managed with IV-insulin, which itself has been identified to have **significant health risks due to the manner in which it is produced.**

Despite the pessimistic prognosis from traditional medicine, accumulating scientific research is validating the power of the body to heal itself from so-called incurable diseases when properly supported. **The discovery of the beta cell regenerative potential of certain foods and natural compounds has the potential to upstage traditional diabetes treatments and maybe even to someday eradicate this intractable disease.** Would you be surprised to learn that avocados possess this cellular rejuvenation potential? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the highest concentration of this power is found in the seed.

Sometimes called “alligator pears” due to their dark, bumpy skin and teardrop shape, avocados produce large seeds that contain numerous medicinal properties. While the seed itself is not typically consumed, it’s the ideal place to look for medicine as it contains concentrated amounts of potent **antioxidants** and phytochemicals found in the flesh of the fruit. In 2007, a group of researchers looked to the avocado to analyze effect on blood glucose levels. The study found that when fed to both diabetic and non-diabetic rats, **avocado seed extract significantly reduced blood sugar**, with the greatest impact observed in diabetic rats. Avocado seed extract produced an overall normalizing effect on blood sugar. Potentially more exciting is the effect that was observed on pancreatic islet cells. Daily supplementation with avocado seed extract had a restorative and overall protective effect on pancreatic islet cells, where the all-important beta cells that produce insulin reside. Researchers concluded that consuming avocado seed extract “may contribute significantly to the reduction of blood glucose levels and can be useful in the treatment of diabetes.” If you are diabetic, adding avocado to your diet may yield further benefits. A 2015 study concluded that **avocado oil can be used to reduce oxidative stress on the liver** which frequently accompanies diabetes and traditional diabetic treatments.

## **Helps prevent cancer**

**You may not know it, but avocados have therapeutic properties that can even help prevent the big “C”—cancer.** Avocados are packed with phytochemicals, biologically active compounds that play a vital role in nutrition and help our bodies resist the onset of disease. Phytochemicals also play an important role in cancer prevention, something that was well-illustrated by the 2007 study aptly name, **Avocado fruit has chemopreventive properties.** This research showed that when extracted and added to cultures of precancerous and cancer cell lines, avocado fruit phytochemicals were able to arrest the cancer cell growth cycle, inhibit growth, and **induce apoptosis**—the death of pre-cancer and cancer cells.

**A 2005 study focused on another super-nutrient found in avocados: the beneficial carotenoids,** responsible for most yellow, orange, and red plant pigments. Carotenoids are attributed with cancer-preventive properties in association with other brightly-colored fruits and vegetables, prompting researchers to isolate these nutrients in avocados in search of similar anticancer properties. They were not disappointed!

The California Hass avocado was selected for this study due to its yellow-green color with associated high-levels of **lutein** (Latin for “yellow”) and related **carotenoids**, such as alpha-carotene and beta-carotene. Researchers also noted avocado’s high-levels of Vitamin E as potentially therapeutic. An acetone extract of avocado was produced containing these various carotenoids and tocopherols and introduced to prostate cancer cells in-vitro. Control groups from the same cell lines were incubated with an extract of lutein-only. **Results showed that incubating cancer and precancer cells with avocado extract led to arrest of cancer growth in the cells.** An additional observed benefit from avocado extract was an increase in healthy cell protein expression. Lutein alone did not reproduce these effects on cancer cell proliferation. Researchers speculated that the high amounts of monounsaturated fat in the avocado might help the body absorb the bioactive carotenoids into the bloodstream better than when supplementing with carotenoids in isolation. In other words, your body gets a bigger cancer-prevention boost from consuming whole foods like avocados than can be obtained from non-whole food sources. This lends credence to the sage advice that if you want to lower your cancer risk, consume a diet high in colorful fruits and vegetables.

## **Helps relieve and prevent arthritis**

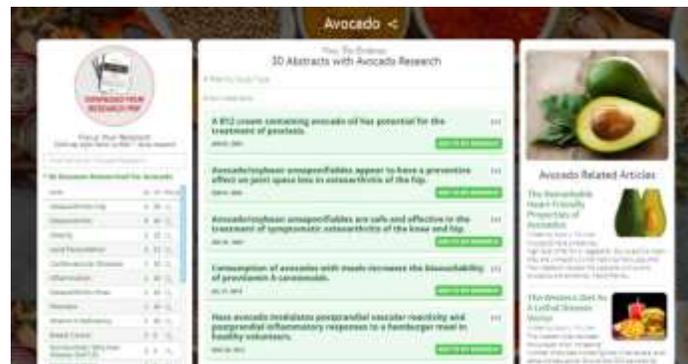
According to researchers at the Musculoskeletal Research Center at University of California-Davis, “**Osteoarthritis** is a painful and life-altering disease that severely limits the daily activities of millions of Americans and ranks as one of the most common causes of disability in the world.”<sup>[2]</sup> Researchers have set to the task of creating breakthroughs in treatment options, since life-extension practices and rising obesity rates equal more osteoarthritis pain in our nation’s future. Much of this research has been focused on the therapeutic potential of a dietary supplement called ASU, short for avocado/soybean unsaponifiables. ASU has proven effective at slowing the progression of osteoarthritis by inhibiting molecules and pathways implicated in the condition.

You may not have heard of this potent dietary intervention, which is hardly surprising considering Western medicine’s insistence on drug-based treatments. But researchers have been demonstrating the effectiveness of this avocado-based supplementation for more than two decades. In 1997, a review was published on the **efficacy and safety of avocado/soybean unsaponifiables in the treatment of symptomatic osteoarthritis of the knee and hip.** The multicenter, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial was aimed at reducing the need for exposure to unsafe pharmaceutical drugs often included in the treatment protocol for this progressive disease. Participants were given one capsule per day of ASU or a placebo for 90 days. During the first 45 days, patients in both groups were also given one of seven predefined **NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs)**. The primary efficacy criteria for this study was the percentage of patients who went back to taking NSAIDs after 45 days, and the delay before re-intake. Results clearly indicated that after six weeks, the patients taking ASU had less need for NSAID pain relief when compared with the placebo group. ASU consumption also had a beneficial effect on functional movement, with the experimental group showing significantly greater overall improvement than the placebo group.

These benefits aren’t just reserved for humans! A 2009 study obtained similarly positive results when **using ASU to treat arthritis in dogs.** Mixed-breed dogs with

osteoarthritis were given 10 mg/kg per day of ASU for eight weeks. Results showed that treatment with avocado/soybean unsaponifiables can reduce the development of early osteoarthritic cartilage and bone lesions in patients with osteoarthritis. **A 2015 review** summarizing current pharmaceutical, non-pharmaceutical, and prospective new treatments for OA, focused on the promising results being obtained with ASU. The beneficial actions of this natural compound include prevention of cartilage degradation, and the promotion of cartilage repair by stimulating collagen. ASU has the potential to correct growth factor abnormalities while decreasing vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) in synovial fluid, a key indicator of arthritis. Beneficial avocado fatty acids inhibit cholesterol absorption, while anti-inflammatory properties reduce pain and stiffness and improve joint function. **Overall, ASU treatment can result in decreased dependence on NSAIDs and pain medication for arthritis sufferers.**

**For additional research on the health benefits of avocado, visit the GreenMedInfo database on the subject.**



## References

[1] <https://www.californiaavocado.com/nutrition/nutrients>

[2] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4303902/>



Sayer Ji is founder of **Greenmedinfo.com**, a reviewer at the **International Journal of Human Nutrition and Functional Medicine**, Co-founder and CEO of **Systeme Biomed**, Vice Chairman of the Board of the **National Health Federation**, Steering Committee Member of the **Global Non-GMO Foundation**.