Dear Alice,

I've heard claims that indulging organic apple cider vinegar on a daily basis can help control weight, control blood pressure, prevent acne, etc. Does this really work? Will organic and non-organic apple cider vinegar yield different effects? Thanks in advance.

Answer

"Apple cider vinegar a day keeps the doctor away" doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, does it? Even still, many people claim that this product of fermented crushed apples yields a variety of health benefits, including those that you mentioned. Usually taken in liquid, powder, or pill form before meals, it's most often used to aid digestion since the high acetic acid content helps break down food. In addition to this, it has also been used for centuries to treat fungal infections and sunburn. Although it may be beneficial for those purposes, there is no scientific evidence that it has any effect on weight, blood pressure, or acne. “The mother” (more to come on that!) is often found in organic apple cider vinegar; however, the research doesn’t indicate how beneficial it is or isn’t to consume over non-organic apple cider vinegar.

The research on apple cider vinegar is inconclusive and ambiguous, but proponents of it claim that the health benefits of apple cider vinegar are often a result of its high nutrient content (including iron, calcium, copper, vitamin B, antioxidants, and potassium). Apple cider vinegar that still contains “the mother,” or the strands of yeast and bacteria that form during the fermenting process, is thought to have probiotic qualities that can be beneficial for gut bacteria. That being said, as of yet, there hasn’t been any scientific backing of the mother’s health benefits.

A common misconception about apple cider vinegar is that it curbs appetite and promotes fat burning. Physiologically, even though acetic acid intake may temporarily facilitate loss of water weight, it doesn't appear to affect fat. In fact, there is very little scientific research that backs up claims of apple cider vinegar aiding in weight loss. Additionally, no relationship has been found between consuming apple cider vinegar and blood pressure or cancer prevalence, but some research suggests that it may moderately lower glucose levels. While it’s relatively low-risk to consume apple cider vinegar and may have some benefits, its high acidity may also cause
erosion of tooth enamel, throat irritation, acid reflux, and interact with other drugs or supplements (particularly with insulin and diuretics).

As with most supplements, consuming apple cider vinegar won’t replace healthy lifestyle habits. Routine physical activity and a diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein can have greater effects on overall health and well-being. If you’re hoping to integrate apple cider vinegar into your diet, it may be wise to consult a health care provider or registered dietitian about a plan that works for you.

In the end, an apple a day is more likely than apple cider vinegar to keep the doctor away!

Alice!

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