Health benefits of dried vs. fresh blueberries

Dear Alice,

Do dried blueberries have the same health benefits as fresh blueberries?

Thanks,
Maria

Answer

Dear Maria,

Blueberries are often referred to as a “superfruit,” and for good reason! Whether fresh, frozen, or dried, blueberries have a ton of nutrients that make them a healthy addition to a balanced diet. While both dried and fresh blueberries have health benefits, you correctly guessed that there are key differences between them as well, including:

- **Calories and sugar.** One cup of fresh blueberries contains about 84 calories and 15 grams of sugar, while one cup of dried blueberries has over 500 calories and 100 grams of sugar. So, while you might be able to eat raw blueberries in larger quantities without worry, paying attention to portion size may be a good idea when eating them dried (especially for diabetics!). But because they’re so calorie dense, dried fruits may be a healthy choice for athletes looking for a quick energy boost.

- **Antioxidant content.** Up to 40 or 50 percent of the antioxidants in blueberries are lost in the drying process, meaning fresh and frozen blueberries have more antioxidants than dried ones. Certain drying processes may remove more antioxidants than others — specifically blueberries that are heat dried and processed with an osmotic treatment (soaking the blueberries in a solution that helps them dry faster) lose more than those that don’t get an osmotic treatment. Also, freeze-dried blueberries tend to lose fewer antioxidants than those that are heat dried. Dried or not, blueberries are an excellent source of antioxidants, with one cup of fresh berries containing up to ten times your daily serving of antioxidants.

- **Fiber.** Dried blueberries come out on top in this category, containing up to twelve grams of fiber per cup versus the three to four grams per cup in fresh blueberries. Twelve grams of fiber satisfies almost half of your daily fiber requirement, making dried blueberries a bowel
movement-friendly snack.
- **Sulfites.** Sometimes sulfur dioxide is used to process dried blueberries, which can induce asthma symptoms in sulfite-sensitive or allergic people. You may want to make sure to read the package carefully if this is a concern for you.

To sum things up, both dried and fresh blueberries have nutritional benefits, with studies showing that blueberries may lower cholesterol, promote cardiovascular health, prevent breast cancer, and provide all the benefits of antioxidants. However, all blueberries are not made equal: while dried blueberries can be a fiber-rich tasty treat, they’re also packed with sugar and calories that could be unhealthy when eaten in large quantities. Fresh blueberries don’t have as much fiber, but they’re low in sugar and calories and are bursting with health-promoting antioxidants. You might think about incorporating both into your diet, with dried fruit in moderation.

Here’s hoping you enjoy some blueberries berry soon!

Alice!

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