



## Health-promoting value of berries – the importance of bioactive compounds



In recent years, consumers around the world have become increasingly conscious of seeking out so-called superfoods - natural products with exceptional nutritional and health benefits. Berries have long been valued for their flavor and rich nutritional content, and recently, their potential health benefits have also been receiving increasing attention

## **Berries – why should you include them in your diet?**

Berries are considered superfoods due to the presence of bioactive compounds (polyphenols), vitamins, minerals, and fiber. They are a source of vitamins C, K, E, folic acid, potassium, manganese, and many other microelements.

They are fruits with a fleshy pericarp, in which the seeds are contained directly within the flesh. A typical berry does not have a hard pit, and its flesh is juicy and readily available.

**Among berries - strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackcurrants, blackberries, chokeberries, gooseberries, cranberries, wild strawberries, and haskap berries dominate.**

**Berries are primarily a source of anthocyanins - natural water-soluble pigments imparting intense color and possess strong antioxidant properties.**

### **Anthocyanins found in berries are:**

- **Cyanidin:** imparts red and purple color
- **Pelargonidin:** imparts orange-red color
- **Peonidin:** imparts purple-red color
- **Delphinidin:** occurs in blue and purple colors
- **Petunidin:** imparts dark red or purple hues
- **Malvidin:** imparts red to blue color.

### **The properties of anthocyanins include:**

- effects on the circulatory system – lowering LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and thus reducing the risk of hypertension, coronary artery disease, and heart attacks
- vision improvement – improving both daytime and nighttime visual acuity, reducing the likelihood of developing glaucoma and macular degeneration
- anticancer effects - **studies conducted on both animals and humans have shown that berries may protect against the development of esophageal, oral, breast, and colon cancers**
- diabetes prevention
- protective effects on the liver
- anti-inflammatory and immune-boosting effects

The multifaceted health benefits of berries are also associated with the presence of other **polyphenols**. The antiviral effect against influenza viruses results from the presence of **flavonoids, proanthocyanidins, and phenolic acids**. These compounds support the health of blood vessels and protect brain cells from oxidative damage, which may delay the development of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's.

In turn, **ellagic acid** may interfere most significantly with the process of cancer development. It is found primarily in raspberries, strawberries, and wild strawberries.

### **Berries – a rich source of vitamins**

Berries contain a large dose of natural vitamin C – higher than citrus fruits, such as lemons. 100 g of haskap berries provides up to 187 mg of vitamin C, while blackcurrants contain as much as 180 mg of vitamin C per 100 g. The recommended dose of vitamin C per day is 90 mg for men, and 75 mg for women (120 mg per day for breastfeeding women). Thus, just a portion of berries a day can make a big contribution to your required vitamin C intake. Berries are also a source of beta-carotene and B vitamins: B1, B2, niacin, and folic acid. Raspberries and blueberries also contain vitamins E and A, and blueberries themselves also contain D.

### **Berries are an excellent source of dietary fiber**

#### **This dietary fiber serves many functions:**

- stimulates intestinal peristalsis,
- reduces the risk of gallstone formation and colon cancer,
- helps lower blood triglyceride levels,
- has antihypertensive properties,
- detoxifies the body by binding heavy metals, for example, and stimulates the development of healthy intestinal flora.



### **Berries = Modern Nutrition Trends**

It is recommended to consume about ½ cup (approx. 70 grams) of berries daily.

Flavorful berries can be enjoyed in many ways – fresh, frozen, dried, in juices, smoothies, or preserves. They pair perfectly with dairy products such as milk, yogurt, kefir, or buttermilk. Added to breakfasts, desserts, or salads, they enrich our diet with valuable nutrients, both sweet and savory. Thanks to their low calorie content, they are a great addition to the diets of those watching their weight. The health benefits of berries can be enjoyed year-round, being readily available during the summer. Frozen or dried berries are a great alternative when fresh berries are unavailable.

**The potential health benefits of consuming berries are invaluable, and their taste will please many palates.**

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