

Why okra is good for you

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Vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet because they provide various nutrients that promote good health and fend off illness. Several studies continue to show that the prevalence of chronic illnesses is very low among people who consume high amounts of assorted vegetables. On the other hand, chronic illnesses have a greater presence among people whose diets are low in vegetables. Okra, also known as lady finger, has important health benefits that reflect the indispensable role of vegetables in a diet. Even though most people are only familiar with okra pods, the leaves of the okra plant are edible too and they are beneficial in many ways. Here are some of the health benefits associated with eating okra.

Kidney and liver health

Okra serves as an important food for promoting kidney function. Various antioxidants found in okra protect the kidney from damage by harmful radicals. Additionally, the impact of okra on kidney health results in improved urine quality. Kidney health is also easily endangered by the existence of conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure and okra helps keep kidneys in good health by suppressing such health conditions. Diabetes is especially harmful to kidney health and the severity of this impact is evident in the number of people suffering from kidney disease induced by diabetes. About half the cases of kidney disease are tied to unmanaged diabetes.

Liver health also gets a boost from okra. Again, antioxidants in okra are the major force because they help the body get rid of toxins that are harmful to the liver. Moreover, antioxidants act as powerful anti-inflammatory agents that combat liver inflammation, thereby tremendously enhancing general liver function.

Vitamin K1

Okra boasts high levels of vitamin K1 which has important health attributes including promoting healthy blood clotting. Research also shows vitamin K1 to possess powerful anticancer properties that slow down growth of cancer cells. Studies have named stomach, oral, and liver cancer to be among the types of cancer minimized by adequate intake of vitamin K1. Besides,

vitamin K1 is also essential for bone health because it boosts the effectiveness of calcium, an important nutrient for a strong skeletal system. Other benefits tied to vitamin K1 are improved cardiovascular health and reduced risk of diabetes. All these properties of vitamin K1 make okra suitable for offsetting a wide range of health conditions.

Lutein and zeaxanthin

Lutein and zeaxanthin are important nutrients and they are also present in okra. Researchers looking into the relationship between diet and vision health have found these two nutrients to be exceedingly vital for maintaining healthy sight. Lutein and zeaxanthin protect the macular region of the eye from harmful radicals and damaging rays. This prevents macular degeneration which may lead to blindness. Statistics show that macular degeneration is a leading cause of age-related blindness. Lutein and zeaxanthin also counter cataracts by preventing harmful radicals from damaging the eye lens. Continuous exposure of harmful radicals to the eye lens may eventually lead to formation of cataracts. What's more, lutein and zeaxanthin are effective for maintaining strong eye tissue.

It is important to note that eye health is a key area of concern among people with diabetes. Unmanaged diabetes is detrimental to sight and eating foods that counter this effect is imperative. With lots of lutein and zeaxanthin as well as other antioxidants, okra provides diabetics with the means necessary to maintain healthy vision.

Lutein and zeaxanthin have remarkable anti-cancer benefits as well. These nutrients are powerful antioxidants that neutralize cancer causing radicals. Also, lutein and zeaxanthin may be beneficial to cardiovascular health by preventing hardening of arteries.

Fiber, beta carotene

Okra is a dependable source of fiber and this makes it ideal for maintaining a healthy digestive system. Fiber eases constipation by maintaining regular bowel movement. Continuous intake of fiber is also important for prevention of colon cancer and other types of cancer affecting the digestive system.

Fiber is also important for blood sugar control, making okra another great choice for preventing or managing diabetes. Additionally, fiber in okra balances cholesterol and this is extremely important for promoting heart health and managing diabetes.

Furthermore, liver health is affected by fiber intake. Okra and other foods rich in fiber are instrumental for maintaining proper liver function and safeguarding against different types of liver disease. Fiber also prevents visceral fat which surrounds the liver and other important organs, thus negatively affecting liver function.

Beta carotene is another vital nutrient found in okra and it has a number of health advantages.

With regards to eye health, beta carotene works with lutein and zeaxanthin to keep eyes healthy and prevent eye cataracts and macular degeneration. Other functions of beta carotene are production of vitamin A, immune support, and cancer prevention.

Preparation

Preparing okra is quite easy. The leaves are prepared in much the same manner as common leafy vegetables like kale. Okra pods may be stir fried or boiled. Another way to prepare okra is adding it to your favorite stew. And okra is one of many vegetables that can be dried. Due to hard texture, this type of okra requires boiling.

Since okra contains fat soluble nutrients like beta carotene and vitamin K, it is wise to add healthy oil like extra virgin olive oil while cooking. Alternatively, you can eat okra with a fat-containing food. Fat is needed for proper absorption of fat-soluble nutrients. Without fat, it is hard for the body to fully utilize these nutrients.

Conclusion

Okra is a very healthy food with so many more health benefits in addition to the ones that have been outlined. In order to get maximum benefits, okra must be eaten along with other healthy foods. Okra's health properties also show that vegetables play an important role in achieving a nutritionally balanced diet.

Further reading

www.nutri-facts.org/en_US/nutrients/carotenoids/lutein-and-zeaxanthin/disease-risk-reduction.html

<https://draxe.com/liver-function/>

www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/diet-and-nutrition/lutein?sso=y