

REVIEW ARTICLE

Miraculous Health Benefits of Exotic Dragon Fruit

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ABSTRACT

Dragon fruit is an exotic and delicious fruit, which is often considered a tropical "superfood" because of its wealth of benefits. This fruit has somewhat "under the radar" quality that makes it less well known than many mainstream fruits and health foods. It is also known as "pitaya or pitahaya" which comes from the genus *Stenocereus* and *Hylocereus* respectively. Dragon fruit has a number of health benefits including its ability to aid in weight loss, improve digestion, lower cholesterol, strengthen the immune system, and boost energy levels. It also helps to prevent cancer and heart disease, defend against bacteria and fungi, and helps in the overall functioning of the body. The health benefits of the dragon fruit are mainly attributed to its antioxidant, antibacterial, and nutritional properties. The benefits include a boost to immunity, body metabolism, and a smoother digestive process.

Keywords: Phytonutrients,, Antioxidants, Carbohydrate metabolism, Immune system Captin, HDL, LDL

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INTRODUCTION

Dragon fruit, as it is more commonly known as is a fruit native to South America. Over time, its cultivation has spread to South Eastern Asia as well, and it is quite a common fruit in the countries of China, Thailand, and Vietnam. The dragon fruit gets its name from the way its peel looks – like the skin of a dragon, yellow or red with green scales. Although its availability all over the world is pretty limited, its popularity is gaining traction. Commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions, the dragon fruit is one of those exotic fruits that offer a multitude of benefits for your skin, hair, and health. It has its origins in Mexico, South America, and Central America, but New World settlers probably brought it to Southeast Asian nations like Cambodia, Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, where it remains an important part of the dietary fruit intake.

Other Names of the dragon fruit are *Pitaya*, *Moonlovers*, *Night blooming Cereus*, *Strawberry Pear*, *Belle of the Night* and *Conderella plant*.

Dragon fruit comes in three varieties, namely, red skin with red flesh, red skin with white flesh, and yellow skin with white flesh. There are both sweet and sour dragon fruits, depending on the species, shape, and size. In terms of the most common form of dragon fruit, it is slightly smaller than a cantaloupe, red, and covered in broad spiky growths. When you open it, the texture is like a kiwi, and the meat is filled with small black seeds that help improve digestion. The meat of the fruit is used to make wine and can be strained into other beverages and the leaves of dragon fruit can be steeped for a very healthy form of tea. The rough outer skin has little nutritional value and is rarely eaten. The unique thing about this particular cactus is that the pitaya flowers bloom overnight and usually wilt by the morning [1].

Dragon fruits have a surprising number of phytonutrients. Rich in antioxidants, they contain vitamin C (equivalent to 10 percent of the daily value), polyunsaturated (good) fatty acids, and several B vitamins for carbohydrate metabolism, as well as carotene and protein. Calcium is present for strong bones and teeth, iron and phosphorus for healthy blood and tissue formation. The benefits are realized in a number of ways, from a strengthened immune system and faster healing of bruises and wounds to fewer respiratory problems. Dragon fruits have zero complex carbohydrates, so foods can be more easily broken down in the body, helped by vitamin B1 (thiamin) and other B vitamins [2].

The phytochemical captin, used as a medication to treat heart problems, is present in the fruit itself, and an oil in the seed operates as a mild laxative. The seeds of dragon fruits are high in polyunsaturated fats (omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids) that reduce triglycerides and lower the risk of cardiovascular disorders. Eating dragon fruit can help the body maintain such normal function as ridding the body of toxic heavy metals and improved eyesight. Lycopene, responsible for the red color in dragon fruit, has been shown to be linked with a lower prostate cancer risk. However, consume dragon fruit in moderation because it contains fructose, which may be harmful to your health in excessive amounts [3].

Dragon fruit has an extremely low amount of cholesterol, which ultimately helps the body break down this fruit quickly, keeping you happy and healthy. It's the perfect fruit to maintain your weight and satisfy your sweet tooth. Dragon fruit is an excellent source of monounsaturated fats, helping the heart stay in great condition. To clean up your digestive system, eat a dragon fruit. They have a high fiber content, which can assist with poor digestion and constipation. Eating the flesh and seeds, which contain good protein, will keep your body fortified and satisfied. To rid the body of free radicals and cancer-producing properties, you can eat foods that contain antioxidants. Believe it or not, dragon fruit is giving acai berries a run for their money. The high amount of fiber in dragon fruit can ultimately help regulate diabetes, as it can stabilize blood sugar levels by suppressing sugar spikes. However, with any dietary changes or modifications, always consult your doctor to make sure this is a good food for you. Arthritis directly affects the joints and causes severe irritation and immobility. Adding dragon fruit to your diet can help you fight these ailments. Dragon fruit's benefits for people suffering from arthritis are so great that it's commonly referred to as the "anti-inflammatory fruit."

THERAPEUTIC IMPORTANCE

One of the most beneficial aspects of dragon fruit is its ability to give a serious boost to your body's defense system. The high level of vitamin C found in dragon fruit is one of the strongest assets to your body's immune system, and it stimulates the activity of other antioxidants in the body as well. They actively seek out and eliminate free radicals, the dangerous byproducts of cell metabolism, which have been directly linked to potentially fatal conditions like cancer and heart diseases.

Dragon fruit is also packed with other vitamins besides vitamin C, including the B vitamin group. The B1, B2, and B3 vitamins present in dragon fruit improve everything from blood pressure, skin health, and cholesterol levels to thyroid function and carbohydrate metabolism. Dragon fruits have a significantly higher fiber content, which means that they can help your body bulk up its bowel movements, facilitating smooth passage through the digestive tract, stimulating peristaltic motion, and inducing a release of digestive juices. By regulating bowel function with dietary fiber, this fruit helps in preventing various conditions like constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, and even serious diseases like colorectal cancer [4].

Along with the antioxidant quality of vitamin C that boosts the immune system, dragon fruits also contain other sources of natural antioxidants. Carotene, found in dragon fruits has been linked to a number of anti-carcinogenic qualities. It helps in reducing the size of tumors as well. Basically, dragon fruits boost your immune system from every direction, so if you feel like you're frequently getting sick, feeling under the weather, or even if you are at a high risk of developing cancer, dragon fruit might be the answer for you [5].

The final boost to your immune system from dragon fruit is its antifungal and antibacterial qualities. These can help increase the white blood cell count in the body, which defend against toxins and also inhibit the entrance or growth of fungal or bacterial infections in the organ systems. You will also find that it stimulates cell regeneration and speeds up healing, so wounds and bruises will heal at an increased rate. Dietary intake of protein is essential for healthy functioning of our body and dragon fruit is an unusually good source of protein. Many of the proteins we gain from fruits, vegetables, and meat are metabolized by enzymes in our body and turned into usable proteins that can speed up cell repair, enhance strength and metabolism, and help us lose weight and increase muscle mass.

Dragon fruit is quite an exotic fruit with a number of unique properties, one being that they contain no bad cholesterol and almost no unhealthy saturated fats. By reducing the amount of cholesterol in the blood, the chances of developing plaque in the arteries and veins are small, thereby reducing the likelihood that you'll suffer from atherosclerosis, heart attacks, and strokes. By using dragon fruit as a source of many other nutrients, you are not negatively impacting your body in any way, hence, the fruit's reputation as a "superfood" is true. Fat is beneficial for your body and the seeds of dragon fruit do contain this good fat, which can lead to HDL cholesterol ("good" cholesterol). HDL cholesterol actively decreases the amount of LDL cholesterol by inhibiting the receptors that it binds to, on the walls of arteries [6].

COSMETICS ARENA

Eating a dragon fruit with its rich antioxidants can keep the skin tight and young. You can even make a face mask using the fruit combined with honey as a natural alternative to anti-aging masks. Dragon fruit juice is an excellent agent for treating colored hair. By simply putting the juice or a conditioner containing dragon fruit on your scalp, you can protect your chemically treated or colored hair. This will keep the hair follicles open, allowing your hair to breathe and remain healthy and smooth. This treatment is not just for teenagers. Rich in vitamin C, this fruit becomes a great topical ointment. Turn a slice of dragon fruit into a paste and apply it to your reddened areas on your face or skin, then rinse with water. For best results, use twice daily. By combining dragon fruit with cucumber juice and honey, you can create a compound much like aloe that can soothe burned skin. Abundant in vitamin B3, dragon fruit can moisturize sunburned skin and release heat from the affected area. Like other red fruits, dragon fruit contains lycopene, which helps protect against cancer and heart disease. How can all these benefits be taken advantage of in this visually beautiful, exotic fruit? It's best eaten chilled, chopped into cubes and added to fruit salad or blended into a refreshing drink or smoothie [7].

CONCLUSION

It could easily be called a "crazy" fruit, as its appearance is so improbable. Dragon fruit is low in calories yet offers numerous nutrients, including vitamin C, B vitamins, phosphorus, protein, calcium, fiber, captin, and antioxidants. It's proven to lower blood sugar levels as well as blood pressure, strengthen bones and teeth, promote healthy blood and tissue formation, strengthen the immune system, heal bruises and wounds faster and prevent respiratory problems. Like other red fruits, dragon fruit contains lycopene, which helps protect against cancer and heart disease. How can all these benefits be taken advantage of in this visually beautiful, exotic fruit? It's best eaten chilled, chopped into cubes and added to fruit salad or blended into a refreshing drink or smoothie. This may become your new favorite fruit, and you don't even have to slay a dragon. It could easily be called a "crazy" fruit, as its appearance is so improbable. Dragon fruit is low in calories yet offers numerous nutrients, including vitamin C, B vitamins, phosphorus, protein, calcium, fiber, captin, and antioxidants. It's proven to lower blood sugar levels as well as blood pressure, strengthen bones and teeth, promote healthy blood and tissue formation, strengthen the immune system, heal bruises and wounds faster and prevent respiratory problems. Like other red fruits, dragon fruit contains lycopene, which helps protect against cancer and heart disease. How can all these benefits be taken advantage of in this visually beautiful, exotic fruit? It's best eaten chilled, chopped into cubes and added to fruit salad or blended into a refreshing drink or smoothie.

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