

Mushroom and its Benefits

Y. D. Haritha

Ph.D., Scholar, College of Community Science, Human Development and Family Studies, Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

SUMMARY

Mushrooms are widely known for their great taste and amazing health benefits. Packed with a ton of essential vitamins and minerals, they make for an excellent addition to the diet, adding flavor to many different recipes. Mushrooms are a low-calorie food that packs a nutritional punch. Loaded with many health-boosting vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, they've long been recognized as an important part of any diet.

INTRODUCTION

Mushrooms are a fungus, but that hasn't deterred most Americans from adding them to meals. Mushrooms bring a savory flavor to meals without adding much fat, calories or sodium. But the health benefits don't stop there. Researchers continue to uncover how mushrooms can ward off chronic disease and improve individual everyday health.



Benefits of Mushrooms

1. Decrease the risk of cancer

A review of 17 cancer studies from 1966 to 2020 shows that eating just 18 grams of mushrooms (equal to about a 1/8-cup or two medium mushrooms) a day may lower your risk of cancer by as much as 45%. Mushrooms are a powerful source of ergothioneine, an amino acid and antioxidant that prevents or slows cellular damage. Some mushroom varieties (such as shiitake, oyster, maitake and king oyster) have higher amounts of ergothioneine. But researchers found that incorporating any variety of mushrooms into the daily diet will lower the risk of cancer.

2. Lower sodium intake:

Sodium and high blood pressure often go hand in hand. Sodium causes the body to retain excess fluid, which can increase blood pressure. To decrease the sodium intake, consider adding mushrooms to the meals. Mushrooms are naturally low in sodium – an entire cup of white button mushrooms has just five milligrams of sodium. They offer savory flavor that reduces the need for added salt to keep your blood pressure low. A study from the Culinary Institute of American and UC Davis shows that swapping half of the meat for mushrooms in a traditional ground beef recipe can maintain flavor while reducing sodium intake by 25%.

3. Promote lower cholesterol

Mushrooms make an excellent substitute for red meat while minimizing calories, fat and cholesterol. Research shows that shiitake mushrooms, in particular, help to keep cholesterol levels low. They contain compounds that inhibit the production of cholesterol, block cholesterol from being absorbed and lower the overall amount of cholesterol in your blood.

4. Protect brain health

Researchers continue to study the effects of eating mushrooms on mild cognitive impairment (MCI). MCI causes memory and language difficulties and is often a precursor to Alzheimer's disease. In a study in Singapore, participants who ate more than two cups of mushrooms a week had a 50% lower risk of developing MCI. Even those who ate only one cup saw some benefit. The mushrooms eaten by participants included golden, oyster, shiitake and white button mushrooms.

5. Provide a source of vitamin D

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium to maintain and build strong bones. Many people rely on supplements or sunshine to get vitamin D, but if he/she're looking to get this nutrient through the diet, mushrooms may be the answer. They are the only type of produce that is a source of vitamin D. Like humans, certain mushrooms exposed to UV light or sunlight can increase their vitamin D amounts. White button, portabella and cremini mushrooms provide the most vitamin D after exposure to UV light or sunlight. To get the recommended daily amount, slice three mushrooms (or one portabella), expose them to sunlight for at least 15 minutes and enjoy. Eating a little more than one cup of maitake mushrooms achieves the same goal without the need for sun exposure.

6. Stimulate a healthier gut

The microbiome in the gut is home to organisms and bacteria that play a large role in individuals health and mood. One way to keep the gut healthy is to stimulate the growth of healthy bacteria in that space with the use of prebiotics, such as mushrooms. Research shows that mushroom polysaccharides, their most abundant carbohydrate, stimulate the growth of healthy bacteria. While many foods break down with stomach acid, the polysaccharides found in mushrooms pass through the stomach unchanged and can reach the colon to encourage bacteria growth there.

7. Support a healthy immune system:

Mushrooms contain macronutrients that support a healthy immune system. According to the Mushroom Council, the immune system will benefit from mushrooms whose nutrients include:

Selenium, which helps the body make antioxidant enzymes to prevent cell damage. Choose cremini or portabella mushrooms for the most benefit.

Vitamin D, which assists with cell growth, boosts immune function and reduces inflammation. Maitake mushrooms offer an easy way to add vitamin D to the diet.

Vitamin B6, which helps the body form red blood cells, proteins and DNA. Shiitake mushrooms are the best choice for vitamin B6.

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