

The Nutritional Marvels: Unveiling the Astonishing Health Benefits of Dry Fruits

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SUMMARY

Dried fruits are modified forms of fresh fruits prepared through various drying techniques, resulting in concentrated and shelf-stable snacks. They are rich in bioactive compounds such as vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and natural sugars, making them a "superfood" with multiple health benefits. Regular consumption of dried fruits can contribute to healthy bones, muscles, skin, and improved immunity. They also offer advantages such as weight management, diabetes control, heart health, and enhanced digestion. Due to their potential therapeutic properties, further research is warranted to explore their applications in the pharmaceutical industry. Incorporating dried fruits into daily diets can support a well-balanced lifestyle and promote overall well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Dried fruits are those fresh fruits from which a major portion of original water has been removed either by natural method of sun-drying or by using artificial means like specialized dryers or dehydrators. So practically, dried fruits are modified forms of fresh fruits prepared using different drying techniques. Fruits are dried to minimize their water activity, which results in less microbial degradation and longer shelf life. Owing to the removal of moisture, dried fruits are more concentrated than fresh fruits.

Nutritional Benefits of Dry Fruits

Dry Fruits are also rich source of Calcium, Copper, Iron, Magnesium, Potassium, Phosphorus, Protein, Riboflavin, Vitamin A-C-E-K-B6 and Zinc. This means healthy bones, muscles, nerves, teeth and skin. They are loaded with bioactive compounds such as phenolic acids, vitamins, minerals, natural sugars, organic acids, flavonoids, tannins, saponins, and phytosterols, making it a "superfood." The presence of these bioactive compounds imparts various salutiferous (health-giving) properties to human beings like antidiabetic, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidative, cardioprotection, hepatoprotection, and so on. Moreover, dried fruits help in reducing body weight, constipation, the ageing process, anaemia and improve the immunity system of humans. Hence, due to their rich bioactive compounds, dried fruits are a boon to mankind (Chang *et al.*, 2016).

Daily Dose Recommendation of Dry Fruits and Nuts: Ideal consumption of dry fruit and nuts should be 20g per day (National Institute of Nutrition).

List of Some Dry Fruits and Their Benefits

1. Almonds (Badam)

Almonds are a popular dry fruit due to their numerous health benefits. Almonds are high in vitamin E, essential oils, and antioxidants, making them ideal for adults and children. It can be consumed raw or roasted. For the best results, eat a small number of soaked almonds in the morning daily for a healthy and fit body (Kamil and Chen, 2012).

Health Benefits:

- Keeps your heart healthy
- Helps in weight management
- Keeps skin and hair healthy
- Controls blood sugar levels

2. Pistachios (Pista)

Pistachios can be a good option for people who have a habit of constantly eating. Pistachio can help you feel fuller for longer by suppressing your appetite. It contains oleic acid and antioxidants, as well as carotenes,

vitamin E, copper, manganese, potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, selenium, zinc, and polyphenolic antioxidants (Bullo *et al.*, 2015). This dry fruit in the shape of a heart has anti-inflammatory properties.

Health Benefits:

- Prevents diabetes
- Lowers bad cholesterol levels
- Boosts immunity
- Helps to reduce weight

3. Cashews (Kaju)

Cashews are well-known in India for their delicious flavour and creamy texture. It contains a lot of vitamin E, vitamin B6, protein, and magnesium for your body (Shahrajabian and Sun, 2023). This kidney-shaped seed can help you lose weight, improve your heart health, and control your blood sugar levels.

Health Benefits:

- Helps in weight loss
- Reduces bad cholesterol
- Reduces the risk of heart diseases

4. Apricots (Khumani)

Apricots can help you feel full by providing essential nutrients like vitamin A, vitamin E, magnesium, and copper. It is also high in antioxidants, which aid in the fight against internal infections. Apricots are small, orange-coloured, tart-tasting fruits high in vitamins and minerals. This nutrient-dense fruit guards your heart and eyes.

Health Benefits:

- Good for eyes
- Keeps your bone and skin healthy
- Helps in weight loss

5. Dates (Khajoor)

Dates are tropical fruits that come in both dry and wet varieties. Dry dates are high in digestive fibres and can help you stay full for a long time by suppressing your cravings. This iron-rich fruit benefits our bodies in a variety of ways (Mousavi *et al.*, 2014). This iron-rich and delicious dry fruit remains ideal for the winter season. You can mix it into a dessert or eat it on its own. Dates can be seeded or deseeded.

Health Benefits:

- Helps to reduce weight
- Increases haemoglobin levels
- Boosts energy
- Enhances gut health

6. Walnuts (Akhrot)

Walnuts are a single-seeded, hard stone-like fruit high in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and proteins. Because of their numerous benefits, you can incorporate them into your daily diet. Walnuts' fatty acids may help you lose weight and keep your heart healthy (Binici *et al.*, 2021).

Health Benefits:

- Reduces stress
- Prevents cancer
- Good for skin and hair

7. Raisins (Kishmish)

Raisins are dried grapes with a sweet and sour flavour. It is a good source of iron and can help treat anaemia (Painter and Waters, 2013). A daily handful of raisins can be beneficial to your digestive system and aid in acidity and constipation treatment.

Health Benefits:

- Promotes weight loss
- Treats constipation and acidity

- Treats anaemia

9. Dry Figs

This one-of-a-kind fruit has an edible green or purple skin covered in hundreds of tiny seeds. Fig flesh has a mild, sweet flavour and is high in nutrients. Many people use figs to treat problems with the reproductive and respiratory systems (Alasalvar and Shahidi, 2013).

Health Benefits:

- Improves bone health
- Ward off growth of cancer cells
- Helps control blood pressure
- Helps in weight loss

CONCLUSION

Dried fruits are aptly referred to as a "wonder snack" owing to their multiple health benefits. Because of the availability of rich bioactive compounds, it plays an important role in our well-being by aiding in the reduction of lifestyle diseases. Research on dried fruits must be continued due to their tremendous importance as a bioactive component in the pharmaceutical industry, as they have beneficial effects against diabetics, cardiovascular disorders, inflammations, microbial activities, liver damage, and so on. Hence, consuming dried fruits daily is conducive to maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

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