

Exploring Apricots: Nutritional Powerhouse and Health Benefits

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SUMMARY

Apricots are not only delicious but also packed with nutrients and health benefits. They are rich in vitamins A, C, and E, which are crucial for maintaining healthy skin, vision, and immune function. Apricots also contain dietary fiber, which supports digestive health and can aid in maintaining a healthy weight. Additionally, they are a good source of antioxidants, such as beta-carotene and flavonoids, which help combat oxidative stress and reduce inflammation. Potassium in apricots supports heart health by helping regulate blood pressure, while their natural sugars provide a quick energy boost. Overall, incorporating apricots into your diet can contribute to better overall health by supporting your immune system, improving digestion, and providing essential vitamins and minerals.

INTRODUCTION

Apricot (*Prunus armeniaca L.*) belongs to family Rosaceae. Apricots are small stone fruit or drupes—thin-skinned fruits with a stone in the center that holds a seed. Apricots, with their vibrant orange hue and sweet-tart flavor, are not just a delightful treat for the taste buds but also pack a punch in terms of nutrition and health benefits. Apricot fruit is usually consumed raw or processed into juice, beverages, lyophilized products, jelly, and jam because of its delicacy and health benefits. Their petite size makes them great for snacking, while the dried version is great for throwing in a trail mix for a fiber boost on the go. Besides fiber, their vitamin and antioxidant profile promotes various facets of health. Apricot kernels are also being used in Chinese medicine for cough, constipation, and asthma (Fatima *et al.*, 2018).

Nutritional Profile

Apricots are low in calories but dense in essential nutrients. A typical serving (about 100 grams) of apricots provides:

Vitamins: Rich in vitamin A (in the form of beta-carotene), apricots support vision health, skin integrity, and immune function. They also contain significant amounts of vitamin C, which is crucial for immune system support and collagen production.

Minerals: Apricots are a good source of potassium, which helps regulate blood pressure and maintain proper muscle function. They also contain smaller amounts of minerals like magnesium, phosphorus, and calcium, contributing to overall bone health.

Fiber: With a moderate amount of dietary fiber, apricots aid in digestion and contribute to a feeling of fullness, making them a satisfying snack choice.

Antioxidants: Apricots contain various antioxidants such as beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin, which help neutralize harmful free radicals in the body and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.



Health benefits of apricots

- 1. Beneficial for healthy eyes:** Research shows that vitamin A is needed for the formation of rod cells (rhodopsin) of the eyes, Rhodopsin consists of vitamin A as 11-cis retinal and the opsin protein of these rods, which is of fundamental importance for the health of human vision. Since apricots are rich in vitamin A, they are good for improving eyesight. Vitamin A deficiency can result in thickening of the cornea and eventually blindness. Glaucoma, macular degeneration, and cataracts are proven to decrease with regular consumption of apricots and other similar fruits. As per studies, topical application of apricot kernel extract can reduce dry eyes by stimulating tear production (Kim *et al.*, 2016). [Vitamin E](#) is a fat-soluble antioxidant that enters your eyes directly to protect them from free radical damage (Rasmussen and Johnson, 2013; Clifford *et al.*, 2013).
- 2. Heart Health:** The potassium content in apricots supports heart function and helps regulate blood pressure. The fiber content also contributes to heart health by helping to lower cholesterol levels.
- 3. Weight Management:** The fiber and low calorie content of apricots can aid in weight management by promoting satiety and reducing overall calorie intake.
- 4. Prevent Alzheimer's disease:** Apricot is packed with many essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals, making it considered a powerhouse of healing properties and the richest source of vitamin C. A single serving of 165g of sliced apricot has more than 22% of the body's need for vitamin C. Many scientific researchers have concluded that problems like decline in cognitive functions, forgetfulness, lack of orientation are symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Research has found that serum concentrations of the antioxidants vitamin C and beta-carotene are significantly lower in patients with mild dementia than in controls.
- 5. Prevent colitis:** The indigestible part of all plant foods, also called dietary fiber, makes its way through most of the digestive tract intact and acts as a kind of internal broom. Once it reaches the colon, bacteria convert it into energy and also into a compound known as "short-chain fatty acids." It is known to relieve the symptoms of colitis, inflammation in the intestines. One serving of apricot contains almost 8.68% of the daily required intake. Due to their high fiber-to-volume ratio, dried apricots are said to be sometimes used to relieve constipation or promote diarrhea.
- 6. Heal inflammation of the colon and ulcers:** Apricot kernel has numerous dietary supplements such as antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and pharmacological properties that are beneficial in colitis. Research has concluded that apricot kernel extracts treat colon inflammation and ulcers. Apricot kernel is traditionally used to treat inflammation and dermatitis as well as an anti-inflammatory agent. Apricot kernel oil is used as a laxative to increase bowel movements and also as ear drops to treat ear infections and tinnitus.
- 7. Antioxidant benefits:** Apricot contains a very high content of vitamin A, which acts as a mild antioxidant. In addition, it cleanses the body simply by increasing kidney function. Vitamin A has long been associated with eye health, and including enough vitamin A in your daily diet can also improve your ability to see at night, as well as macular degeneration. One cup of apricots (165 g) has 22.57% of the daily recommended intake.
- 8. Supports a healthy metabolism:** The copper contained in Apricot plays an important role in up to 50 different metabolic enzymatic reactions that take place in the body every day. Copper is essential for the smooth functioning of the nervous system, cardiovascular system, digestive system and almost all other parts of the body due to its influence on metabolic processes. Slow metabolism, low energy levels, and other signs of poor metabolic health result from copper deficiency. One cup of apricots (165 g) has 14.33% of the daily recommended intake.
- 9. Prevents muscle spasms and pain:** Potassium is essential for muscle relaxation. Low potassium can result in cramps, pain, muscle spasms, difficulty with fatigue when exercising, and can also result in weight gain. Apricot must therefore be included in our daily diet to stay active and healthy without pain. One cup of apricots (165 g) has 9.09% of the daily recommended intake. A decoction of the root is also traditionally used to soothe inflamed and irritated skin and is also used to treat asthma, acute or chronic bronchitis, coughs.
- 10. Healthy hair:** Apricot is full of vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant; helps reduce environmental damage to hair. Vitamin E oil can retain the natural moisture in your skin, which will help your scalp from becoming dry and flaky. Apricots contain bioactive compounds, which may play an active role in cancer prevention (Kitic *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, the oil will also make the hair look healthier and fresher. Therefore, apply a few drops of vitamin E oil to your hair if your hair looks dull and dry.
- 11. Bone health:** Apricots contain significant amounts of bone-strengthening minerals such as copper (14.33%), potassium (9.09%), phosphorus (5.43%), iron (8%), manganese (5.52%), magnesium (3.81%) and calcium (2.10%), which contributes to healthy and strong bones. Apricots help in healthy bone development by reducing

various age-related conditions. Studies also show that apricots can reverse bone loss and even alter bone metabolism in postmenopausal women (Rendina *et al.*, 2013).

12. Apricot scrub: Fine lines and wrinkles can be removed by the exfoliating action of an apricot peel. It also helps remove dead skin cells. New and lighter skin cells appear. It also helps to get rid of skin blemishes.

13. Skin health: Skin conditions like acne and redness can also be treated with apricot oil. Acne and pimples can be cured by applying apricot paste. Eczema, sunburn and scabies can be treated with apricot leaf juice. Using an apricot peel reduces the appearance of blackheads and prevents acne because it cleans the skin and unclogs the pores.

CONCLUSION

Apricots are not only delicious but also offer a wide range of health benefits due to their nutrient-rich profile. Whether enjoyed fresh, dried, or in various culinary creations, apricots provide a tasty way to enhance overall health and well-being. Including apricots in your diet can be a flavourful and nutritious addition to support a healthy lifestyle.

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