



Nutritional value and health benefits of potatoes

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Potatoes are one of the most common and important food sources on the planet, and they contain a wealth of health benefits that make them all the more essential as a staple dietary item for much of the world's population. These health benefits include their ability to improve digestion, reduce cholesterol levels, boost heart health, protect from polyps, prevent cancer, manage diabetes, strengthen the immune system, reduce signs of aging, protect the skin, increase circulation, reduce blood pressure, maintain fluid balance, reduce insomnia and boost eye health.

Nutritional value of potatoes: The reason that potatoes have spread across the globe so quickly and has been so widely accepted is because they are a storehouse of energy and nutrition, including vitamins, minerals, and essential organic compounds.

Mineral content: If you eat potatoes regularly, you ensure a good supply of water and ions in your body. This is because they are rich in potassium. The concentration is highest in the skin and just beneath it. So, eating the potato with its skin is always beneficial. They also contain calcium, iron and phosphorus.

Vitamin content: Potatoes are known for the large amounts of Vitamin C present in them. Typically, 100 g will contain about 17 mg of Vitamin C. In addition to this, they also contain Vitamin A, B and P.

Water content: Potatoes look very big in size, but water accounts for about 70-80 per cent of their weight. So the belief that you become fat by eating potatoes is a misconception. Of course if your potato servings contain large quantities of butter, or if you can't keep away from those high-fat and high-cholesterol French fries, then you are bound to become overweight.

Starch content: Potatoes contain about 17 per cent starch and they are one of the best natural sources of starch. However, you should avoid eating sprouted potatoes as sprouting leads to the conversion of starch into sugar.

Note: most of the nutrients in a potato are just beneath its skin. If you eat the skin along with the inside part, you get all these nutrients, or else what you primarily end up

eating is just carbohydrates.

Health benefits of potatoes :

Weight gain: Potatoes are primarily made of carbohydrates and contain very little protein. This makes it an ideal diet for those excessively lean or thin people who desperately want to put on weight. The vitamin content includes vitamin C and B-complex, which also help in proper absorption of carbohydrates. That is one of the reasons that potatoes make up a large part of the diet of sumo wrestlers, as well as many other athletes who need large energy reserves to burn off in order to compete.

Digestion: Since potatoes predominantly contain carbohydrates, they are easy to digest and facilitate digestion. This property makes them a good diet for babies or for those who cannot digest hard food, but need energy. However, remember that eating too many potatoes on a regular basis may cause acidity over time. Potatoes also contain a considerable amount of fibre or roughage, more in raw potato and cold ones than boiled or hot ones. This stimulates peristaltic motion and increased secretion of gastric juices, which eases digestion and prevents conditions like constipation and protects the body from more serious conditions like colorectal cancer. Fibre is also connected with scraping cholesterol out of the arteries and blood vessels, thereby increasing heart health.

Skin care: Vitamin C and B-complex as well as minerals like potassium, magnesium, phosphorus and zinc are good for the skin. Apart from that, pulp obtained from crushed raw potatoes, mixed with honey, can work well in skin and face packs. This even helps to cure pimples and spots on the skin. Again, this pulp, if applied externally on burns, provides quick relief and faster healing. Smashed potatoes, and even water in which potatoes have been washed, are very good for softening and cleaning skin, especially around the elbows, and the back of the hands.

Scurvy: The vitamin C present in potatoes can help prevent this disease, caused by a deficiency of vitamin C. It is characterized by cracked lip corners, spongy and bleeding gums, and frequent viral infections. Although it has been eliminated from most first and second world

countries with ready access to vitamin C, it still exists in certain nations of the world, so the prolific presence of potatoes in the world helps with this problem.

Rheumatism: There are two parts to the effect of potatoes on this condition. Vitamins like the calcium and magnesium help to provide relief from rheumatism. Also, water obtained from boiling potatoes can relieve the pain and inflammation of rheumatism. However, due to high starch and carbohydrate content, it tends to increase body weight which may have adverse effects on rheumatic people. It is a fine balance, so you must apply it as a helpful approach without consuming the potato itself.

Inflammation: Potatoes are very effective in reducing inflammation, both internal and external. Since it is soft, easily digested and has a lot of vitamin C (a very good antioxidant that repairs tissue wear and tear), potassium and vitamin-B6, it can relieve any inflammation of the intestines and the digestive system.

Cancer prevention: Certain types of potatoes, particularly red and russet ones, contain high levels of flavonoid antioxidants and vitamin A like zeaxanthin and carotenes, they can protect you against many types of cancer. Also, research at the Agricultural Research service has shown that potatoes contain a compound called quercetin, which has been proven to have anti-cancer and anti-tumor properties. Finally, the high levels of vitamin A and C both have antioxidant qualities that can protect your body from the devastating effects of cancer.

High blood pressure: Since high blood pressure can occur for a number of reasons that include diabetes, tension, indigestion, nutrient balance, food content and many others, different treatments are required. Luckily, potatoes can alleviate multiple possible causes; potatoes can be used to relieve high blood pressure due to tension. They can also treat indigestion due to abundance of vitamin C and fibre within it, but they should be avoided if the high blood pressure is a result of diabetes. The fibre present in it is helpful in lowering cholesterol and improves functioning of insulin in the body, which aids in the lowering of blood pressure. This is because there is a direct relation between blood pressure and the glucose level in the blood; insulin helps to regulate that glucose level. Furthermore, the potassium found in potatoes (46% of daily requirement per serving) lowers blood pressure, since potassium functions as a vasodilator.

Brain function: Proper functioning of the brain depends largely on the glucose level, oxygen supply, various components of the vitamin B complex and certain

hormones, amino acids and fatty acids like omega-3. Potatoes cater to almost all the needs mentioned above. They are high in carbohydrates, and thereby maintain good levels of glucose in the blood. This prevents the brain from letting fatigue creep in and it keeps your cognitive activity and performance high. Next, the brain needs oxygen, which is carried to the brain by the hemoglobin in the blood; its main constituent is iron. Potatoes contain iron as well. Therefore, they help deliver oxygen to the brain as well. There are a wide variety of vitamins and minerals in potatoes that positively affect the function of the brain, including phosphorus, zinc, and the B complex vitamins. The vasodilating properties of potassium have also been connected to stimulation of brain function due to increased blood flow to that essential organ.

Heart diseases: Apart from the vitamins (B-complex, C), minerals and roughage, potatoes also contain certain substances called Carotenoids (lutein, zeaxanthin). Carotenoids are beneficial for heart health and the functioning of other internal organs. Again, since potatoes raises the glucose level in the blood and over-consumption may cause obesity, which puts pressure on your heart, you must be careful about how often you use potatoes for this health benefit. This method of preventing heart disease is not recommended for obese or diabetic people.

Kidney stones: Kidney Stones, also known as Renal Calculi, are caused mainly due to increased levels of uric acid in the blood. In such cases, foods high in protein should be avoided, particularly animal proteins such as meat, turkey, shrimp, fish, eggs, and milk, as well as spinach, raw plantain, black grams and certain beans, which drastically increase the level of uric acid in the blood. Iron and calcium also contribute to forming the stones. Potatoes are rich in both of these so logically, they wouldn't fit in as a preventative measure of kidney stones, but they also contain magnesium, which inhibits the accumulation or deposition of calcium (calcification) in the kidney and other tissues, thereby proving beneficial for treatment of renal calculi.

Diarrhea: They are an excellent component of an energy-rich diet for those suffering from diarrhea, since it is very easy to digest and contains mild roughage. However, eating too many potatoes can cause diarrhea due to the excessive ingestion of starch.

Skin benefits of potato : Apart from being used as a food source, potatoes have an important role to play in skincare as well. As pointed out earlier, they are rich in vitamin C which is vital for maintaining skin health. Thus, this starchy vegetable is beneficial for your skin in the

following ways.

Removal of dark circles : Potatoes are a natural under eye brightener and so, applying potato juice or potatoes directly on the affected area can banish dark eye rings.

How to use :

- Peel and slice a raw potato into large pieces.
- Placing them in a cloth or handkerchief, stick them on your eyes for 15-20 minutes.
- Wash off with warm water.
- Doing this regularly will reduce your dark circles considerably.
- You can also apply potato juice under your eyes with a cotton ball to fade away dark circles.

Treatment of wrinkles : Potato is considered as an effective anti-aging beauty agent, particularly in warding off wrinkles. Regular application of potato juice imparts a healthy glow to your skin. It also helps to soften your skin as well as keep wrinkles at bay.

Treatment of dark spots : Potatoes are a natural way of fading away those dark spots.

How to use :

- If you have black spots on your face, you can blend peeled potatoes in a blender
- Next, apply them on your face.
- Give a gentle massage
- Then do peeling for 5 minutes
- Once done, rinse off with clean water.

Removal of facial blemishes : Facial blemishes adversely affect your appearance and potato juice is a great natural way to get rid of them.

How to use :

- Use cold potato juice as a daily facial rinse
- This can help you get rid of your blemishes
- It will help reveal clear and perfect skin.

Treatment of sunburns: Potatoes are wonderful for treating sun burnt skin.

How to use :

- All you need to do is place cold potato slices on the affected areas
- Alternatively, you can simply dab potato juice on the spot.
- This will give you a soothing and cooling sensation as well as diminish your suntan.

Skin lightening : Potatoes are a natural skin lightening agent.

How to use :

- Apply a mask of grated raw potato on your face and rinse off with water after 30 minutes.
- Using this on a regular basis will make your face

smooth, clean and bright as well as reduce facial swelling.

- You can also apply a mixture of lemon and potato juices to lighten your skin naturally.

- This acts as mild bleach for your skin and yields quick results.

Potato for dry skin : If you have dry skin, potatoes will help give you that smooth skin feeling in minutes.

How to use :

- Make a face mask by mixing a grated potato with half a teaspoon of curd.
- Apply it on your face for 20 minutes and then wash it off.
- This will act as an anti-aging mask to hydrate your skin from within
- It will also help to replenish moisture into dry skin to iron out fine lines effectively.

Lifting of dead skin cells : Potatoes can also remove dead skin cells on the face.

How to use :

- You can apply grated peeled potatoes on your face for 10 minutes
- Once done, rinse with clean water.
- Doing this regularly will rejuvenate your skin.

Natural cleanser: Potato can be used as a natural facial cleanser.

How to use :

- For this purpose, cut one cucumber and one potato into medium pieces
- Now blend these in a blender for 20 seconds.
- Next, add one teaspoon of baking soda and a little water to the mixture.
- You can use this mixture to clean your face. This will make your skin more shiny and refreshed.

Treatment of rashes, itching sensation and insect/ pest bite :

How to use :

- In case of rashes, itching sensation and insect bites:
- Place a slice of raw potato on the affected area for a few minutes.
- This should be done several times a day for quick relief.

Hair benefits of potato : Besides being wonderful for your skin, potatoes used along with other ingredients can benefit your hair. Some of the ways in which potato can be beneficial for hair are the following:

Promotes healthy hair : Potatoes are a great natural ingredient to help achieve healthy hair.

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