



Why You Should Have a Fruit-Filled Summer

By Shivam Joshi, MD
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If you're like most Americans, you probably aren't eating enough fruit: Americans eat a [single](#) serving of fruit per day, on average. In fact, only a small minority—[24 percent and 13 percent](#), respectively, of the population—are meeting the recommended minimum for fruit and vegetable consumption, which is between 5 and 9 [servings](#) per day. Low fruit consumption can [increase](#) your chances of dying, but eating even one [additional](#) serving can mitigate that, which is why we should all be eating more fruits this summer.

Summer picnics usually go hand-in-hand with hot dogs. But were you aware that [processed meats](#) can increase your risk of dying? Replacing bacon, hot dogs, and sausages with healthier options like fruits will help you avoid the toxic [nitrosamines](#) found in processed meats. And fruits contain antioxidants and phytonutrients—a win, win! Furthermore, the beneficial effects of fruits aren't just limited to mortality; they have also been shown to help prevent and treat some of our most common diseases.

Whole Fruit Can Help You Avoid Heart Disease and Type 2 Diabetes

Several studies have shown that fruits have a [dose-dependent](#) relationship with the incidence of heart disease, meaning that those who eat more fruits have a lower risk of developing the condition. Fruits have been so effective in reducing heart disease that a whole province, North Karelia in Finland, [embraced](#) the idea by changing its dairy farms to berry farms to increase fruit consumption—and improve the health—of its citizens. By replacing animal-based foods with berries, along with other healthful changes, the region went from having one of the highest rates of heart disease in the world to one of the lowest within a generation.

Fruits have also helped patients all over the world [lose weight](#) and lower [cholesterol](#). Fruits, contrary to popular belief, can also reduce your risk of developing [diabetes](#). I often hear of patients who avoid eating fruits because of the sugar content, but these patients could not be more mistaken. While fruits do contain sugar, they have

[not](#) been shown to worsen existing diabetes when consumed in their entirety, as opposed to being consumed as a juice, which concentrates the sugar to high levels. Fruit juice can increase [body weight](#) and the risk of [diabetes](#). In contrast, the fiber content in whole fruit offers a protective effect by slowing digestion and absorbing the sugar load. In fact, fruits have recently been shown to be [beneficial](#) for people with diabetes. Eating fruits is healthy for people both with and without chronic illnesses, but unfortunately too many people don't eat enough of them.

Fruit Is Health Food, So Eat Generously

I, too, was once guilty of only eating just a single piece of fruit per day. When I was a child, my favorite fruit was the banana, and I would eat a single banana every day, perhaps like many of you. After eating my daily banana, I thought I had fulfilled my daily need for fruit, and the idea of eating more than one banana per day was almost heretical. But I was wrong. The adage of “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” should not be taken literally. Eating [multiple](#) servings of the same fruit is both safe and encouraged! Scientific studies have shown that eating [20 servings](#) of fruit daily is safe, and even [more](#) fruits could be consumed since there is likely no upper [limit](#) to healthy fruit consumption. I now eat several bananas in one sitting.

Another major reason I hear people cite for not eating fruits is their perceived lack of fun when compared to a prepared dessert, for example. In fact, fruits can be extraordinarily [fun](#) to prepare, present, and eat. A berry medley, [peach cobbler](#), and a [fruit salad](#) are all great options for an outdoor picnic. In terms of fruit variety, there's no better season than summer, with its [bountiful array](#) of choices like plump apricots, decadent cherries, ripe peaches, succulent nectarines, juicy melons, and sweet berries of all sorts.

Eating a single fruit a day leaves a lot of healthful opportunities still on the table, both figuratively and literally. With so many easy options to have fun and be healthy with fruits, there is no reason to hold back from

(continued)

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eating more of them this summer. What are you waiting for?

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