

# Fruity goodness

BURSTING WITH FLAVOUR AND SWEETNESS, FRUITS ARE NATURE'S OWN ENERGY FOODS AND SUPPLY MANY OF THE NUTRIENTS OUR BODY NEEDS TO STAY HEALTHY

**F**RUITS consist of up to 80% water, just like the human body. Therefore, it is rather logical for us to feed ourselves with a food of the same affinity, to meet the liquid and nutritional requirements of our body.

This food that can be enjoyed raw, plucked straight from the tree, makes a complete and natural food for humans. In fact, fruits are the healthiest food on the planet as they are 100% cholesterol free, low in fat, and contain all the vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and phytonutrients (plant nutrients) our body requires.

A strict diet of raw fruits and vegetables has been found to have healing effects on certain ailments. Gentle on the stomach and easily digested, fruits are nature's own multi-vitamins and are able to ward off illnesses by boosting the body's immune system.

"Take apples for instance. As the saying goes, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away".

The benefits of eating apples are manifold. A rich source of antioxidants, vitamin C and E, apples help to mop up free radicals that are the cause of wrinkles, heart disease and various cancers. Apples are also high in dietary fibre which makes the body more efficient at eliminating waste by stimulating a sluggish digestive system.

Silicon and malic acid in apples help to keep hair and nails strong and healthy, and restore vitality to the skin. Malic acid is also believed to help flush out toxins that might otherwise lead to cellulite.

And if you've forgotten to brush your teeth, munching on an apple helps to keep your teeth clean and your breath fresh.

To get the full range of phytonutrients found in fruits, it is advisable to eat fruits from a variety of colour categories - red, green, orange-yellow, blue-purple and white.

Red fruits like red apples, strawberries and pomegranates are rich in flavonoids (polyphenols) which protect against heart disease while tomatoes, watermelon and pink grapefruit contain lycopene which is helpful in preventing prostate, lung and stomach cancer.

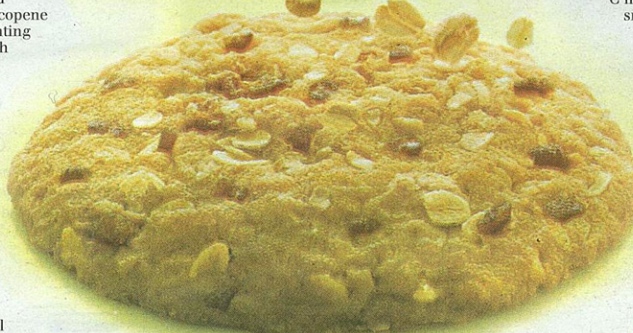
The antioxidant properties in lycopene also help to reduce free radical damage and shield skin from sun damage.

Green fruits include kiwi fruit which has plenty of immune-boosting vitamin C, and avocado which is packed with vitamins A, E and mono-unsaturated oils that can help lower cholesterol levels.

Fresh or dried, apricots are full of nutrients and flavour. This orange-yellow fruit contains beta-carotene, which protects the eyes from sun damage and improves night vision.

Other fruits in this colour category include oranges which are a good source of vitamin C; mangoes which aid in cleansing the blood and detoxifying the kidneys; and papaya which assists digestion.

Black and purple grapes, plums,



Bananas contain the most amounts of complex carbohydrates found in a fruit and are important to supply energy to the body. They also contain tryptophan, which has a sedative effect on the body to induce sleep and combat stress.

High in fibre, pears act as a gentle laxative to keep bowel movements regular.

### » FUEL FOR THE BODY

A healthy diet should consist of six to eight servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Fruits make a healthy snack because they are easily digested and don't leave you feeling bloated and uncomfortable.

Compared to meat which takes six to eight hours to digest, fruits are digested within 50 minutes, fuelling the body with a quick boost of energy.

### » BRAIN FOOD

In the olden days, it was believed that eating fish would make one smarter as fish like salmon, sardines and mackerel contain omega-3 fatty acids which are responsible for keeping the brain cell membranes healthy and aiding communication within brain cells.

What scientists are now discovering is that fruit is also fuel for the brain. The natural sugars in fruits have been found to stimulate the memory and help people recall information faster and more easily.

And because it doesn't take as much energy to digest fruit as compared to meat or rice, more energy can be utilised by the brain to formulate ideas and solve problems.

### » IMMUNE SYSTEM BOOST

If stress is making you susceptible to colds, load up on vitamin C. Most fruits are packed with vitamin C, which helps strengthen the immune system and keep colds at bay. Smoking has a destructive effect on the level of vitamin C in the blood. If you're a smoker, make sure you get an extra dose of vitamin C by eating fruits rich in this vitamin such as guava, oranges, kiwi fruit and mangoes.

A diet that has plenty of fresh fruits can fulfil our nutritional requirements and reduces the need for vitamin supplements.

### » HEALTHY FIBRE

A daily diet of fruits will ensure you're getting enough

fibre to stimulate the digestive system and prevent constipation. Rather than taking detoxifying teas or stimulants which may cause you to become dependent on them, consuming fruits is a natural and healthier way of detoxifying the system.

Acid fruits like grapefruit, lemons and oranges have the strongest detoxifying effect.

Fibre is also beneficial in lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, reducing the risk of heart disease. Low in fat and high in fibre, fruits fill you up so you're less likely to gorge on unhealthy, calorie-laden snacks.

In fact, when the body is fed with foods containing all the vitamins, minerals and nutrients required to maintain good health, it stops craving for unhealthy food.

As fruits are low in sodium, you'll also be less prone to water retention which is brought on by consuming food that has a high salt content.

### » ANTI-AGEING BENEFITS

Free radicals are responsible for damaging the body's cells, leading to certain chronic diseases and ageing. Our bodies manufacture antioxidants to protect us from free radicals but the onslaught from internal free radicals caused by infections, illness, accidents and surgery; and external free radicals like cigarette smoke, pollution, UV rays, chemicals and radiation can overpower our home-grown army of antioxidants.

Fruits are nature's beauty secret. They contain antioxidants - nutrients or enzymes - that help to fight free-radical damage and neutralise the potentially-damaging effects of oxidation.

The most powerful antioxidants supplied by foods are vitamins A, C and E. Studies done by the Human Nutrition Research Centre at Tufts University in Boston found that prunes, raisins and blueberries are the three leading wrinkle-zapping fruits as they contain the most amounts of vitamins A, C and E.

Eating fruits rich in antioxidants helps to maximise the number of antioxidants in your body to prevent ageing.

Clear, bright, healthy-looking skin is also dependent on the efficient functioning of our liver, kidneys and intestines. The role of the liver is to manufacture substances which help remove waste products and filter out any harmful chemicals from the body.

When the liver and kidneys are unable to flush out waste and toxins trapped in our system, this results in splotchy, pale, acne-ridden skin. A diet high in fruits will help the kidney eliminate waste more efficiently and place less strain on the liver.

To get more fruits into your diet, start the day with a fresh fruit salad, oat porridge with mixed fruit or healthy fruit juice. During the day, snack on fresh fruits, raisins and dates or biscuits filled with fruity bits.

For dessert, make your own ice popsicles using fruit juice or enjoy a delicious parfait made from layers of fresh strawberries, yoghurt and cereal.

You can also now enjoy oatmeal biscuits with fruits.

prunes, blueberries and raisins fall into the category of blue-purple fruits. The purple colour in these fruits signify the presence of anthocyanins, a disease-fighting substance that protects against gum and heart disease by strengthening blood vessels in the gums and improving blood circulation.

Though not completely white, bananas and pears are categorised as white fruits.

