

"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."

- ***Author uncertain***

An old friend with whom I recently reconnected has this quote on her Facebook page and it really hit home for me, for more reasons than I'll go into right now. But it's a great reminder of something I've written about before. We never know how much time we have, so we truly must enjoy the special moments when they're presented to us. This is important because sometimes, in the actual moment, you may not realize how special that moment really is. So take a chance. Go after a dream. Forgive someone who hurt you. Support someone who really needs it. Be accepting when someone makes a decision you don't understand. Now that I've had this very important reminder thanks to an old friend, I will absolutely pay more attention to those special moments that truly take my breath away. I will share one, which happened on April 8th. So I'm giving a special shout-out to my Virginia Cavaliers for winning the national basketball title. Winning that championship truly took a lot of breaths away, not just mine. Congrats to them on a well-deserved and hard-earned victory! I hope you find your own moments and when you do, I'd love to hear about them.

Yours in health,



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Berries Are a Superfood



Now that spring has at last finally sprung, all kinds of fruits that were pretty unavailable during the winter are about to become quite plentiful. So it's a great time to talk about berries, which will soon be abundant everywhere. Many of you are probably aware that blueberries are considered to be a superfood, in the same category of items like walnuts, kale, beans and broccoli. But were you also aware that other berries are just as super and are powerful allies in helping protect your health? In case you're not, this month, I'm going to give you some great information on why berries really are a pretty special fruit.

Would you be surprised to learn that berries: blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, cranberries and black raspberries can provide more health benefits than many pharmaceuticals on the market? And the great thing about them is that they're natural, created by Mother Nature herself. Berries are known antioxidants, which help reduce free radicals running rampant and causing turmoil in our bodies thanks to things like stress, pollution, chemicals and quite frankly, everyday life in general. Here are just a few of the great things berries can do for us.

Helps our Brain. For over 10 years, scientists at Tufts University have been studying the effects that berries have on the brain and what they've learned is pretty surprising. Eating berries on a regular basis (but they don't define "regular" so I take that to mean daily) can help improve the ability of brain cells to form new connections with each other, create new brain cells, stop inflammation from damaging brain cells and even help prevent age-related short-term memory loss. Berries may even protect against the formation of plaque in the brain, which can lead to or contribute to Alzheimer's. One reason is because the compounds they contain can cross the blood-brain barrier and locate the learning and memory centers. This Tufts study split their subjects into two groups. One ate an ounce of freeze-dried blueberries (which is essentially the same as 1 cup of fresh berries) for 3 months. The other group had a placebo. The blueberry group had a 20% improvement in a memory test over those who ate the placebo. Strawberries are also good for our brain. Another Tuft's study used the equivalent of 2 cups of fresh strawberries and found the strawberry group had much more improvement in their memories than those in the placebo group. In addition, research published in the *Annals of Neurology* found that women who ate two servings of strawberries or one serving of blueberries a week suffered from less mental decline than the women who didn't eat them. This study included data from 16,010 women over the age of 70 and it showed that the women with the highest berry intake postponed cognitive decline by about two and a half years.

Helps our Heart. Berries contain antioxidants known as anthocyanins, which give them their color. But these compounds, found almost exclusively in berries, can help to reduce high blood pressure, which is a contributing factor to heart attacks and strokes. A study done at Florida State University found that post-menopausal women with high blood pressure saw a reduction of 5.1% (top number) to 6.3% (bottom number) in their readings. Cranberries are also a surprise superstar here. A study done by the USDA discovered that people who drank two 8-ounce glasses of no sugar added cranberry juice had lower levels of C-Reactive Protein (CRP), which is an important marker in determining whether you have potentially damaging inflammation in your system as well as lower levels of triglycerides and blood sugar. This was surprising to me since it's always better to eat the fruit than drink the juice. But this particular study was done with juice. Cranberry juice is also instrumental in helping clear up bladder infections. I imagine that eating the entire berry would provide even more benefit than drinking the juice.

Helps fight Cancer. This study was another surprise to me, but in a paper published by the Medical College of Wisconsin, they stated that cranberries can help fight 17 different cancers including bladder (which my father had), colon, breast, oral, prostate, brain and even stomach cancers. Black raspberries were found to be particularly helpful for colon and oral cancers. I plan to look for more research on this particular topic since cancer has impacted my family in addition to some friends. Most of these studies were done with a powder form of the berries because you couldn't possibly eat enough berries to help reverse cancer. However, to help prevent cancer, it's recommended to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily, preferably organic.

Helps our Digestion. Berries are an excellent source of fiber, which is an important nutrient for our digestive system and can help us lose weight. Fiber helps us feel full, which reduces our desire to eat. Along with drinking plenty of water, eating plenty of fiber also reduces constipation, which is especially important for pregnant women.

Keep in mind that when buying berries (and most fruits and vegetables) you really need to buy organic. Strawberries contain more pesticides than any other fruit, ranking #1 on the Dirty Dozen list. Blueberries are ranked #13. I'm quite surprised blackberries and raspberries aren't on the list. Please contact me if you want the list. In closing, I just want to remind you that every bite of food you take is either fighting disease or feeding it. Choose to fight. Have a wonderful month.