

“Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith.”

- **Henry Ward Beecher**

This seemed like a really good quote for this month as I prepare to adapt to my new normal. I can either be anxious about my son moving to a new city, nine hours away from me, or I can have faith that all will be okay with him...and me. It's a really good reminder that I need to choose the handle of faith to get me through life's latest emotional challenge. I think most people have faith within, but sometimes it takes a radical change in circumstance to nourish those seeds of faith and encourage them to grow. To have faith means that we have to believe what we don't see. Then we are ultimately rewarded by being able to see what we believe. That's truly a gift. I think that faith makes pretty much everything possible. Love on the other hand, makes everything seem easy. So as I (and many others on the same path) approach our new normal, it will take both faith and love to help us turn the page on our book of life and start what will hopefully be a happy and exciting new chapter.

Are Berries Better than Drugs?



I figured it was time to get back to my “*food as medicine*” series. Since it's almost summer, berries are abundant, so they seemed to be the perfect choice for this month. Berries are considered a “*superfood*.” They contain plenty of antioxidants, including anthocyanins, which give them their color. I highly recommend buying organic, especially strawberries, which contain more pesticides than any other fruit or vegetable.

There have been many studies on the impact of berries on health. For more than 10 years at Tufts University, scientists have been studying the effects of berries on the brain, the cells and on laboratory animals. They learned that eating berries on a regular basis can help brain cells form new connections with each other as well as generate new brain cells, can stop inflammation and oxidation in the brain and prevent or even reverse age-related loss of memory, particularly short-term memory. More recent research has shown that blueberries can actually help rejuvenate the aging brain. That's pretty amazing. The researchers at Tufts studied 37 people, ranging in age from 60 to 75, and divided them into two groups. One group was fed one ounce of freeze-dried blueberries, which is comparable to one cup of fresh berries. The other group was given a blueberry placebo. This study lasted for three months and the participants took tests at the beginning, the middle and the end of the study, which measured learning and memory. By the end, the group who ate the blueberries had a whopping 20% increase in their scores on a memory test compared to those in the placebo group!

The anthocyanins in berries help fight oxidation and inflammation, which are known to cause disease. Here are some of their other benefits.

- **Berries help relieve constipation.** The reason is because most of them have a lot of fiber, and the type of fiber they provide helps prevent bile acid from being converted into a more dangerous, and potentially cancer causing, form. Bile acid is a necessary chemical your body uses for digestion. Berries also help your stools absorb a lot of water, which allows them to travel more quickly and easily through your intestines, therefore helping prevent constipation and hemorrhoids. Elderberries top the list, followed by raspberries and then blackberries.
- **Berries help reduce high blood pressure.** There was a study done at Florida State University with 48 women who had gone through menopause. These women were given either 1/3 cup freeze-dried blueberry powder daily or a placebo. After only two months, the women who received the powder saw a drop in the upper number of their blood pressure (systolic) of 5.1% and a drop in the lower number (diastolic) of 6.3%. Those who were in the placebo group didn't experience any change. The drop realized in the blueberry group ultimately helps reduce the likelihood of a stroke or a heart attack.
- **Berries help reduce other risk factors for heart disease.** Cranberries are another superstar when it comes to improving health. The Human Nutrition Research Center at the U.S. Department of Agriculture ran a study in which it chose 56 people with an average age of 50. In this study, half of the participants drank two 8-ounce glasses of cranberry juice (without any added sugar) per day. The other half didn't drink the juice. After just two

weeks, the juice drinkers had lower levels of C-reactive protein (“CRP”) in their blood. High levels of CRP indicate that inflammation is present, which is a precursor of disease. Additionally, they also had lower triglycerides and blood sugar. These two studies seem to indicate that eating berries reduces the risk of heart attacks. In fact, one study published in *Circulation*, described how researchers analyzed 18 years of data from almost 94,000 women and found that those who ate at least three servings of blueberries or strawberries per week had a 34% lower risk of having a heart attack! Additionally, because berries are high in anthocyanins, they help dilate blood vessels and can help prevent blood clots.

- **Berries can help reduce the incidence of cancer.** There was a scientific paper published by researchers at the Medical College of Wisconsin that showed cranberries can help fight 17 different cancers! That’s pretty amazing. This includes the following cancers: bladder (my dad had this one), blood, brain, breast, colon, oral, prostate, stomach and cancer of the esophagus. While doing research for this newsletter, I came across a number of studies that showed black raspberry powder or gel can reduce oral lesions and can not only kill colon cancer cells, but can also stop them from dividing and growing. Please note that you probably couldn’t eat enough black raspberries to have this effect, which is why having it in powder or gel form is crucial.

Here are some interesting facts on a few different berries.

Strawberries are an excellent source of Vitamin C, folate, potassium and both insoluble and soluble fiber. Interestingly enough, once you slice strawberries, they gradually lose their vitamin C. So be sure to eat them as soon as you cut them. I was quite surprised to learn that more than 70 varieties are grown in the U.S. Because of their high Vitamin C content, they can help reduce outbreaks of cold sores as well as bleeding gums (gingivitis) and the effects of shingles. They’re also pretty highly rated for alleviating motion sickness. A lesser known benefit is their ability to relieve a sunburn by simply cutting the berry and applying its juice to the skin. Strawberries are considered one of the “dirty dozen” so be sure to buy organic or clean them well to remove all the pesticides.

Blueberries have some Vitamin C but beware, cooking destroys it so be sure to eat them raw. Dried blueberries have long been a popular treatment for diarrhea and other stomach upsets. They also have some mild antibiotic properties and may be helpful against some strains of E-coli. I didn’t realize they were in the same family as cranberries, which means they can also help prevent urinary tract infections. A little known fact about blueberries is that they can also help restore night vision and can help reduce the healing time for bruises. Additionally, a flavonoid in blueberries called pterostilbene lowered cholesterol as effectively as the commercial drug Lipanor.

Cranberries are a fair source of Vitamin C and fiber. The juice (please no sugar) helps prevent or alleviate urinary tract infections (“UTI”). They’re super tart, which is why people add so much sugar to make them palatable. Cranberries actually contain a natural antibiotic substance that makes the walls of the bladder inhospitable to the organisms that cause UTIs. This prevents bacteria from growing and which is why they also work to heal wounds. Cranberries also contain bioflavonoids, which provide a number of health benefits. A little known fact about cranberries is that they yield chemicals that can increase the amount of cholesterol your liver takes out of your blood. Once in the liver, the cholesterol can be processed for removal from the body. Another interesting fact about cranberries is they can help eliminate bad breath because they help prevent bacteria buildup in the mouth. However, eating too many can have corrosive effects on the teeth due to their acidity. Cranberries also contain quercetin, which as you’re aware from previous newsletters, is a critical nutrient for building the immune system.

Blackberries are a good source of Vitamin C, bioflavonoids, folate, Vitamin E, iron and calcium. Blackberries also contain ellagic acid, which is a substance thought to help prevent cancer. It was interesting to learn that if you are allergic to aspirin, you may have a similar reaction when eating blackberries. The reason is because they are a natural source of salicylate, an ingredient found in aspirin. Blackberries also help relieve constipation.

Raspberries are a rich source of Vitamin C and both soluble and insoluble fiber and contain useful amounts of folate, iron and potassium. They also provide bioflavonoids, which may help protect against cancer. Like blackberries, they also provide ellagic acid, which cooking does not destroy. Therefore, feel free to eat them raw or cooked. Also like blackberries, their natural salicylate could cause a reaction in people allergic to aspirin. Raspberries mold really quickly so be sure to eat them pretty much as soon as you buy them.

Hopefully, I’ve whetted your appetite enough for you to do some of your own research on berries. I’d certainly rather eat them than take medicine to cure what ails me.

Have a wonderful month.