10 Untold Health Benefits of Pistachios for All Ages

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Pistachios belong to the cashew family, and these nuts grow on small, bushy deciduous trees. Pistachio trees grow widely in regions of Middle East and Central Asia. The first evidence of pistachios being consumed by humans dates back to 6,000 BC. The nuts that are consumed are actually the seeds of the fruits. The seeds are extracted from the mature fruits and dried before being consumed. Pistachios have been used for centuries in the preparation of delicacies and sweet dishes. The health benefits of pistachios are associated with improved cardiovascular health, weight management, improved digestion and protection against diabetes.

Nutritional Profile of Pistachio Nuts

Pistachio nuts are one of the healthiest nuts that are not only dense in nutrients, but are also extremely beneficial for heart health. These nuts are high in fiber and healthy fats that help in lowering cholesterol and aid in weight management.
Pistachios are richer in protein content compared to other nuts. 1 ounce of pistachios contains 6 grams of protein – the highest in comparison to other nuts.

The total fat content of pistachios is the lowest compared to other nuts. 1 ounce of pistachios contains 13 grams of fat.

A major part of the fats present in pistachios are healthy mono-unsaturated fatty acids such as antioxidants and oleic acid.

Various important trace minerals are found in pistachios such as calcium, potassium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, selenium and copper.

Top 10 Benefits of Pistachio Nuts for Health

Extremely delicious and packed with nutrients, pistachios have been the symbol of robust health since ancient times. These nuts were added to milk in order to enhance strength and improve overall health.

Rich Source of Nutrients

Pistachio nuts form part of a balanced diet because these nuts are a rich source of healthy fats, proteins and minerals. There are just 557 calories for each 100g of pistachios. Pistachios are loaded with vitamin E (especially gamma-tocopherol), B-complex vitamins, folate and vitamin B6. Vitamin E acts as a potent antioxidant that protects the cell membranes against harmful free radicals.

Pistachios are a powerhouse of essential minerals such as copper, potassium, iron, magnesium, zinc and selenium. Each 100 g of pistachios contain 144% of daily recommended levels of copper, which is an essential trace mineral required for red blood cell synthesis, neurotransmission and enhanced metabolism.
Rich Source of Antioxidants

One of the most effective health benefits of pistachios is that it is loaded with powerful antioxidants. Even the shells of the nuts are storehouse of antioxidants. The mono-unsaturated fatty acids known as oleic acid found in pistachios are one of the most powerful antioxidants that protect the heart by lowering the level of LDL (bad) cholesterol and increasing the level of HDL (good) cholesterol in the blood. It helps in reducing the risk of stroke and coronary artery disease.

In addition, the phytochemicals such as carotenes, polyphenolic compounds and vitamin E contribute to the overall antioxidant activities and remove the harmful oxygen-free radicals.

Improved Heart Health

One of the most important pistachio benefits is that it helps in maintaining proper functioning of the heart and therefore, they are also known as heart-friendly nuts. Munching on pistachio nuts lowers total cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood. It reduces the level of LDL (bad) cholesterol and increases the level of HDL (good) cholesterol, and the results can be noticed within a short period of regular consumption. The antioxidants such as vitamins E and A neutralize inflammation of arteries and blood vessels and reduce the risk of developing heart diseases.
Regular consumption of pistachios raises the level of the antioxidant lutein that protects against LDL oxidization. The compound l-arginine present in pistachios softens the lining of the arteries so that they become flexible and it also prevents the formation of blood clots, thereby minimizing the chances of the arteries becoming clogged with plaque.

**Aids in Weight Management**

Nuts and weight management usually don’t go hand in hand but you can actually promote weight loss by snacking on nuts such as pistachios, provided you limit your portions. Pistachios must be included in a [healthy diet for weight loss](#) because of its high dietary fiber content and low saturated fat content. A 30 grams serving of pistachios contain almost 3 grams of dietary fiber that helps in filling you up so that you eat fewer calories through the rest of the day.
In addition, the high protein content of the nuts promotes the energy burning process of the body and speeds up weight loss. Therefore, nuts and dried fruits should be included in the snack options if you are trying to lose weight.

Protect Against Age-Related Macular Disease

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a gradual breakdown of the macula of the eye that contains the light-sensitive tissues. The macula is responsible for central vision that allows the person to see fine details with clarity. The symptoms of macular degeneration include blurred vision and dark areas in central vision.
Pistachio nuts contain two carotenoid antioxidants – lutein and zeaxanthin that are not found in other nuts. These protective antioxidants protect the tissues of the eyes from inflammation caused by free radicals and oxidative stress. These antioxidants also protect against age-related macular degeneration – one of the leading causes of visual impairments and blindness in elders around the world.

Reduce the Risk of Diabetes

One of the vital health benefits of pistachios is that it helps in controlling and preventing Type 2 Diabetes, one of the most common forms of diabetes mellitus that is caused due to insulin resistance. Eating at least two servings of pistachios per day helps in supplying the recommended daily value of phosphorus that not only aids in breaking down the proteins into amino acids, but also improving glucose tolerance.
Pistachio nuts are especially effective for diabetic patients because in diabetes, the sugars form abnormal bonds with proteins and leave them unusable. This process is called glycation. But the antioxidants present in pistachios reduce the process of glycation and aid in keeping blood sugar levels under control.

Healthy Blood

The list of benefits of pistachios is incomplete without discussing its helpfulness for developing healthy blood. Pistachios are loaded with B complex vitamins, especially vitamin B6 that is an essential vitamin for the production of hemoglobin. Haemoglobin is the main component of red blood cells that helps in carrying oxygen to all the organs, muscles and tissues of the body.

The initial production of hemoglobin requires the presence of vitamin B6. Therefore, daily consumption of pistachios can help in treating blood-related diseases such as anemia. In addition, it also enhances the functioning of various organs due to the increased supply of oxygen throughout the body.
Boost the Immune System

The best way to sustain a healthy immune system is through adequate intake of vitamin B6 that is found abundantly in pistachio nuts. Deficiency of vitamin B6 leads to slowed down immune function that leads to decreased white blood cell response and shrinkage of the thymus – the critical immune system organ.

Vitamin B6 found in pistachios enhances the production of red blood cells and improves the functions of the lymph glands such as the thymus, lymph nodes and spleen and also ensures optimum production of red blood cells that protects the body against infection causing bacteria and viruses. Regular vitamin B6 intake has been shown to increase immune response even in critically ill patients.

Improved Functions of the Nervous System

Here, once again the high vitamin B6 content of pistachio nuts comes into use. Vitamin B6 found in pistachios has a wide range of benefits for the nervous system. The messaging molecules amines need amino acids for developing, which in turn require vitamin B6 for their creation. Proper transfer of impulses through the nervous system is maintained by the insulating sheath, known as myelin present around nerve fibers.
Vitamin B6 plays a fundamental role in the formation of myelin. In addition, vitamin B6 also contributes to the fusion of melatonin, epinephrine, serotonin and gamma-aminobutyric acid – all of which regulate the transmission of messages through the nervous system. So, it is important to include pistachios in a healthy diet in order to maintain healthy nerve functions.

Reduce Skin Dryness

Last but not the least, comes the beauty benefit of pistachios. The natural oils present in the nuts have amazing emollient properties which moisturize the skin and protect it from excessive dryness. The saturated fats found in pistachio nuts also work as excellent carrier oils and is widely used in traditional massage therapy and aromatherapy. The potent antioxidants such as vitamins E and A help in maintaining the structure of the skin cells so that the skin remains supple and youthful. It also slows down the process of skin aging and prevents the appearance of wrinkles, fine lines and age spots. In addition, vitamin E also works as an excellent natural sunscreen that protects the skin from the severe UV rays of the sun and reduces the risk of skin cancer.
Tips for Selection and Storage of Pistachios

A few useful tips and guidelines can help you select the fresh and crunchy pistachios and extend their shelf life significantly.

- Pistachios are one such variety of nuts that are available in the market all year round.
- You can choose between shelled, in shell, salted, roasted and sweetened varieties.
- It is best to buy unshelled ones with the outer coat intact because the whole nuts are the least processed ones.
- You can buy the nuts from bulk bins or in airtight packages.
- If you are buying from the bulk bins then check the nuts in your hand and see if they have a compact shape and uniform texture.
- Reject the nuts that have spots or mold or if they emit a rancid smell.
- Raw pistachios can be stored in a cool, dry place for many months in an airtight container.
- Shelled nuts should be stored in a container and kept in a refrigerator in order to prevent them from turning rancid.

So, enjoy a handful of these healthy nuts the next time you feel hungry and load up on the health benefitting nutrients that help in keeping away chronic diseases and promotes weight loss.

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