

Versatile Avocado Packs Potassium

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What comes to your mind when you think of fruit? Most of us think of apples, bananas, watermelons, and oranges. I think of avocados! The avocado is a fruit that is often unfairly over-looked most people don't even know it is a fruit. Granted, it has an unseemly appearance with its dark, bumpy outside and its bright green inside—but we all know, looks can be deceiving. It is a great fruit which can be part of every person's diet. Avocados provide the body with needed nutrients and can improve healthy living.

The avocado is a fruit which is native to the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Mexico (remember that delicious Mexican favorite avocado-based dip guacamole?). California produces most of the avocados purchased by you. They can be found in almost every grocery store and when in season are inexpensive. They range in color from dark green to black, round to pear shaped, and smooth or bumpy. When ripe they are firm, but give slightly when squeezed. They are stored at room temperature, so there is no need to waste room in your refrigerator.

Avocados are packed full of over 20 different vitamins and minerals. Many of these which are known to fend against chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and possibly cancer. If you are diabetic and concerned with sugars and calories, avocados have much less sugar content than most other snacks options. They do contain a lot of dietary fiber which is good for the intestines. Avocados also have two times the amount of potassium as bananas. The vitamins and minerals in these fruits have a variety of benefits to the body from healthy skin to improved eye health to bone health.

These wonderful fruits are cholesterol and sodium free! This means they do not contribute to high blood pressure or heart problems. They actually help heart health because they contain the antioxidant lutein which helps to break up the matter that can clog blood flow which may result in heart attacks. Avocados are also high in mono-unsaturated and poly-unsaturated fatty acids ("good fats"). They are very low in saturated fatty acids ("bad fats") which are easily found in margarine, butter, mayonnaise, sour cream, other spreads, and dips. These good fats may help memory, lower blood pressure, and increase brain and heart health.

So now that you know why they are good for you, I bet you want to know how you can use them in your diet! Avocados are eaten peeled with the large seed from the center removed. They are great when sliced over a fresh salad or in a sandwich or taco. They also made great spreads and used in place of butter and mayonnaise. Try to use avocado in your tuna salad or any sandwich in place of mayonnaise. Use mashed avocado for vegetable dip or in your salsa. Be creative!!

Eating half an avocado every day or two will greatly increase your nutrient intake and help your health. So next time you want a snack, remember that odd-looking fruit and give it a try. Be brave, eat an avocado!

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