

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF CHERRIES

Cherries are usually prized for their sweet and sour bursts of flavour. However, they also provide much disease-fighting potential, thanks to their unique package of strong antioxidant and anti-inflammatory phytonutrients.

what cherries can do

- ▶ **Ease arthritis.** The natural compounds in cherries ease the pain of arthritis by dampening inflammation. One study of healthy adults showed that enjoying 45 cherries (280 grams) daily for four weeks was associated with a 25 per cent drop in CRP, a key marker of inflammation in the body.
- ▶ **Prevent gout attack.** In a study of 633 gout sufferers, cherry intake over a two-day period was linked with a 35 per cent lower risk of recurrent attacks. When combined with the common gout medication allopurinol, cherries appeared to lower the risk of attacks by 75 per cent!
- ▶ **Muscle recovery.** According to research published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, sipping on tart cherry juice, both before and after an event, may aid your recovery and reduce muscle pain from strenuous exercises such as long-distance running.
- ▶ **Better sleep.** Due to their natural melatonin content, tart cherries

and their juice have been shown to improve sleep quality and duration. They may be particularly useful if you are a shift worker or an insomniac, or if you suffer from jet lag.

how much should you have?

Studies have found benefits from as little as a half cup of frozen cherries or two glasses of tart cherry juice consumed daily.

You can eat sweet or sour cherries. However, the tart varieties have higher levels of total phenolics (important for anti-inflammatory effects), although variability exists between varieties of cherries. Also, sweet cherries have 50 times less melatonin than tart cherries and dried tart cherries, and juice concentrate appears to have none.

Fresh or frozen cherries, juice or concentrate, and cherries in syrup (in cans or glass jars) can all be useful. It is important to note that during the canning process, approximately half of the phytonutrients (anthocyanins and phenolics) leach from the fruits into the syrup. So it's worth drinking this tonic rather than pouring it down the drain.



Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.