

A cup of blueberries a day keeps the doctor away



In a new study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* researchers demonstrated the benefits of eating a cup of freeze-dried blueberries every day.

The subjects were overweight or clinically obese (with BMI > 25), ages 50-75, all with three or more features of metabolic syndrome (increased central adiposity, high triglycerides, low HDL cholesterol, hypertension, and/or impaired fasting glucose).

Over a six-month period, they were administered either 1/2 or 1 full cup of freeze-dried blueberries daily.

While there was no impact on blood sugar control, many markers of circulatory performance were improved in the group receiving 1 cup (27 grams) daily. The effect was dose-dependent, because the consumers of the 1/2 cup (13.5 grams) serving enjoyed no advantages over subjects receiving placebo powder.

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There were measurable improvements in arterial flexibility, endothelial function, nitric oxide, HDL cholesterol, and Apolipoprotein A. The authors conclude that these changes conferred a 13% reduced risk of cardiovascular disease. They urge: "The simple and attainable message to consume 1 cup of blueberries daily should be given to those aiming to improve their CV health."

Of interest is that this study used freeze-dried blueberries, which might seem to vindicate audacious claims that **similarly-prepared fruit and veggie caps** really deliver some of their vaunted benefits. But keep in mind that sheer economics dictate that the contents of these products be derived from cheaper fruits and veggies; plus, at the recommended dosage—generally less than 10 grams per day—they're under the threshold of efficacy demonstrated in this study.

For practical purposes, a packet of freeze-dried blueberries from Thrive Market containing an ample 34 grams costs \$5.29. I calculated that a six-month course of therapy consisting of 4/5 of a packet per day would set you back \$756!

But here's a comparison: A recent study evaluating the efficacy of statins in the prevention of cardiovascular disease in a comparable population of patients with metabolic syndrome demonstrated a reduction in cardiovascular events of 16%. Factoring in the costs of drug therapy, the researchers estimated that "the costs per quality-adjusted life-year gained with statin treatment was estimated at \$6750."

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While a generic statin drug now costs less than a dollar a day, blueberry consumption is not associated with any known side effects like muscle pain, fatigue, liver abnormalities, or deterioration of blood sugar control.

And it's not an either/or. In the study above, even when blueberries were consumed by subjects already taking a statin, additional cardiovascular protection was achieved.