Ask Leyla: What are the health benefits of apple cider vinegar?

Q: I've heard that apple cider vinegar is good for your health, although I'm a little unclear on how. I don't think I've ever heard you talk about it—could you discuss its benefits, if any?

A: Besides being a favorite go-to dressing for salads and coleslaw, apple cider vinegar (ACV) has many good uses for health. For example, vinegar can help blunt the blood sugar response, making it beneficial for diabetics. ACV also contains beneficial polyphenols like chlorogenic acid, which can help inhibit the oxidation of LDL cholesterol.

The fermentation process leaves ACV rich with antioxidants such as catechin, epicatechin, caffeic acid, and gallic acid in addition to acetic acid which confers antimicrobial benefits.

ACV is also alkalinizing in the body (yes, even though it's an acid. FYI — lemon juice is also alkalinizing, despite its acidity). Having a proper dietary acid/alkaline balance is good for bone health. However, long-term excessive use of ACV can lower potassium which can compromise muscle and bone health.

And there's great news for those trying to lose weight: ACV appears to increase satiety with meals thereby reducing the total amount of calories consumed. It's the level of acetic acid in vinegar that's associated with this effect.

Acid reflux is generally due to inadequate amounts of stomach acid as opposed to too much acid. Taking a tablespoon of ACV in a tall glass of water daily can aid digestion and prevent reflux from happening. Constipation can also be alleviated with ACV. It stimulates digestives juices that aid in healthy digestion to help normalize bowel function.

When purchasing ACV, don't choose distilled vinegar. Look for murkiness in it. You want organic, unfiltered vinegar with the likeness of cobwebs floating around in it. This is known as the "mother" which is comprised of acetic acid bacteria and yeast which can help populate your intestinal microbiota with more of the same.

To your health!

Leyla Muedin, MS, RD, CDN