

THE AMAZING POMEGRANATE

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Introduction

Pomegranates have been used in Middle Eastern natural medicine for centuries to treat everything from conjunctivitis to haemorrhoids; however, their current popularity follows research from America linking them to "prostate health".

Pomegranates contain high level of dietary polyphenols, in particular Ellagic Acid, which have been linked with powerful antioxidant and antiatherosclerotic biological properties. Atherosclerosis is the term used when bad cholesterol is oxidised and leads to the build up of excess plaque in the arteries - a leading factor in heart attacks and strokes.

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Prostate

In the April 2007 issue of *Harvard Men's Health Watch* it was reported that two recent studies suggest that pomegranate juice may help fight prostate cancer.

In one study, scientists grew cells from highly aggressive cases of human prostate cancer in tissue cultures. Pomegranate fruit extracts slowed the growth of the cultured cancer cells and promoted cell death. The researchers then implanted the cancer cells in mice. A group of mice that received water laced with pomegranate juice developed significantly smaller tumours than the untreated animals.

In a preliminary study of men with prostate cancer, pomegranate juice lengthened patients' PSA doubling time (the longer the doubling time, the slower the tumour is growing) from 15 months before treatment to 54 months on the juice.

Preliminary results in test tubes, animals, and humans suggest that pomegranates may also have beneficial effects on cardiovascular disease. Studies show that pomegranate juice can protect LDL (bad) cholesterol from oxidative damage. The juice has also been shown to slow the progression of plaques in mice with atherosclerosis. Results from two small clinical studies are even more intriguing, showing that carotid artery thickness decreased and cardiac blood flow improved in pomegranate juice drinkers.

However, preliminary research also suggests that pomegranate juice may interact with certain medications, much like grapefruit juice does.

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University of California study

scientists from the University of California at Los Angeles found that drinking just under half a pint of pomegranate juice daily could hold back prostate cancer and even prevent older men from dying from the condition [1].

The study of 50 prostate cancer patients, who had undergone surgery or radiotherapy, found that just one glass of the juice a day increased the stability period of the condition almost four times.

All the men in the study had had an increase in blood levels of PSA (prostate-specific antigen) after their treatment, which indicates that cancer is still present. Their PSA levels were then measured over a three year period to see how quickly they took to double – the quicker PSA levels double the more likely a person is to die from their illness.

Although the average doubling time is 15 months, drinking pomegranate juice extended this period to 54 months - almost four times the amount. The researchers concluded that by drinking pomegranate juice to this level a man aged 65 to 70 with the disease might be able to outlive their risk of dying from the condition.

There was also evidence that pomegranate juice was killing prostate cancer cells. The number of cells grown from patients' blood samples fell by almost 30 per cent and the process by which cancerous cells are forced to "commit suicide" rose by 17 per cent.

[1] Phase II Study of Pomegranate Juice for Men with Rising Prostate-Specific Antigen following Surgery or Radiation for Prostate Cancer. Allan J. Pantuck, John T. Leppert, Nazy Zomorodian, William Aronson, Jenny Hong, R. James Barnard, Navindra Seeram, Harley Liker, Hejing Wang, Robert Elashoff, David Heber, Michael Aviram, Louis Ignarro and Arie Belldgrun. Clinical Cancer Research, July 1, 2006

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Can Pomegranates Really Help?

Yes, pomegranates are particularly high in antioxidants, which eradicate free radicals (molecules that can cause damage to cells which can potentially lead to cancer). Researchers suggest that of all the antioxidants that pomegranates contain, ellagic acid may be the most significant.

Ellagic acid is also found in various berries, nuts and seeds, and it is believed to play a role in cancer cell death. Moreover ellagic acid is believed to allow a "chemical process" which improves the blood flow to the prostate and to also reduce inflammation.

The problem is that pomegranate juice often contains low levels of ellagic acid; however, this can be augmented with a suitable commercial supplement.

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Pomegranate Supplement

A typical 500 mg Pomegranate supplement capsule should contain:

200 mg Ellagic Acid (40%) which is approximately 8 x more Ellagic Acid than in a 180 ml glass of pomegranate juice.

And a typical maintenance dose would be 2 x Caps daily.

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Pomegranate Juice

In the past few years, pomegranate juice has become a popular health adjunct; however, is it any good? Yes, several recent studies have shown significant potential health benefits from drinking pomegranate juice.

Health Benefits of Pomegranate Juice

The health benefits of pomegranate Juice include:

- **Alzheimer's Disease Prevention** - It may prevent and slow Alzheimer's disease. In one study, mice bred to develop Alzheimer's disease were given pomegranate juice. They accumulated significantly less amyloid plaque than control mice and they performed mental tasks better.
- **Dental Protection** - Research suggests that drinking pomegranate juice may be a natural way to prevent dental plaque.
- **Fights Breast Cancer** - Studies in Israel show that pomegranate juice destroys breast cancer cells while leaving healthy cells alone. It may also prevent breast cancer cells from forming.
- **Keeps PSA (Prostatic Specific Antigen) Levels Stable** - In a study of 50 men who had undergone treatment for prostate cancer, 285 ml of pomegranate juice per day kept PSA levels stable, reducing the need for further treatment such as chemotherapy or hormone therapy.
- **Lowers Blood Pressure** - One study showed that drinking 65 ml of pomegranate juice per day lowered systolic blood pressure by as much as 5 percent.
- **Lowers Cholesterol** - Pomegranate juice lowers LDL (bad) cholesterol and raises HDL (good) cholesterol.
- **Lung Cancer Prevention** - Studies in mice show that pomegranate juice may inhibit the development of lung cancer.
- **Prevention of Osteoarthritis** - Several studies indicate that pomegranate juice may prevent cartilage deterioration.
- **Protects the Arteries** - It prevents plaque from building up in the arteries and may reverse previous plaque build-up.
- **Protects the Neonatal Brain** - Studies show that maternal consumption of pomegranate juice may protect the neonatal brain from damage after injury.
- **Slows Prostate Cancer** - Pomegranate juice slowed the growth of prostate cancer in mice.

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