



Dragon Fruit and Its Health Benefits

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Dragon fruit, also known as pitaya or pitahaya, is found in the Cactaceae family and is divided into two genera: *Hylocereus* and *Selenicereus*. The *Hylocereus* genus, which includes roughly 16 different species, has the most commercially grown variants. Climbing cacti with a 6-meter long stem are used to cultivate the fruits, and places with less yearly rainfall are better for growth. *Hylocereus undatus* (white dragon fruit), *Hylocereus polyrhizus* (red dragon fruit), and *Selenicereus megalanthus* (yellow dragon fruit) are the three commercially produced kinds of dragon fruits. Because of the black, gritty seeds, the feel of the fruit is sometimes compared to that of a kiwi fruit. The flesh is moderately pleasant and minimal in calories when eaten uncooked. The seeds are eaten with the flesh and have a nutty flavour. The dragon fruit is eaten by cutting the fruit and its texture is sometimes likened compared to that of the kiwifruit due to the presence of black, crunchy seeds. The flesh, which is eaten raw, is mildly sweet and low in calories. Seeds are eaten together with the flesh, have a nutty taste and are rich in lipids (Ariffin *et al.*, 2009). The dragon fruit features a mouthwatering light sweet taste, an intense shape, color, and not forgetting its outstanding flowers. The flower is so beautiful that its nick name is "Novel woman" or "Queen of the night" (Luders and McMohan, 2006). Dragon fruit is a rich source of nutrients and minerals such as vitamin B1, vitamin B2, vitamin B3 and vitamin C, protein, fat, carbohydrate, crude fiber, flavonoid, thiamin, niacin, pyridoxine, kobalamin, glucose, phenolic, betacyanins, polyphenol, carotene, phosphorus, iron and phytoalbumin and are highly valued for their antioxidant properties. (Le Bellac *et al.* 2006)

Health benefits of dragon fruit

- Dragon fruit promotes the healing of wounds and cuts.
- It strengthens the immune system and is used in the treatment of diabetes. Medicine made from its flower and stem improves blood circulation.
- The nutrients of Dragon fruits help to control diabetes and lower cholesterol level and prevent asthma and arthritis. Red Dragon fruit having much iron to increase haemoglobin and erythrocyte levels in pregnant women.
- Fresh and dried Dragon fruit skins both are rich in pectins and Betalains making it natural food thickener and natural coloring agent. One of the natural food additive derived from the disposable part (peel) of the fruit named 'Dragon Fruit Coloring Powder' (DFCP) is using namely as 'albedo'. So, it does not affect the natural benefit of Dragon fruit
- The seeds of Dragon fruits are high in polyunsaturated fats (omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids) that reduce triglycerides and lower the risk of cardiovascular disorders
- Dragon fruit contains a high level of phosphorus and calcium; it helps to reinforce bones and play an important role in tissue formation and forms healthy teeth
- Regular consumption of Dragon fruit that contains a high amount of Vitamin C would help in fighting against cough and asthma; increase the wound healing properties and

quickly heals the cuts areas, enhance the immune system and also stimulate the activity of other antioxidants in the body

- Dragon fruit is also packed with B vitamin group (B1, B2 and B3) which possess an important role in health benefit. Vitamin B1 helps in increasing energy production and in carbohydrate metabolism, Vitamin B2 in Dragon Fruit acts as a multivitamin, it aids to improve and recover the loss of appetite. And Vitamin B3 present in dragon fruit plays an important role in lowering bad cholesterol levels; it provides smooth and moisturizes skin appearance
- Dragon fruit is integrated with several skin youthful elements like vitamin C and mineral like phosphorus, which has several beneficial functions in our body. As it is found in every cell, it potentially repairs the tissue and cells which are indispensable for the youthfulness of skin, slow down a premature aging process and prevents from aging. It is also helpful in treating age- related acne problems.

References

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