

Cretan Wild Artichoke

Cynara Scolymus



Top 8 Health Benefits of Artichokes:

Although often considered a vegetable, artichokes (*Cynara cardunculus*) are a type of thistle.

This plant originated in the Mediterranean and has been used for centuries for its potential medicinal properties.

Its alleged health benefits include lower blood sugar levels and improved digestion, heart health, and liver health.

Artichoke extract, which contains high concentrations of compounds found in the plant, is also increasingly popular as a supplement.

Here are the top 8 health benefits of artichokes and artichoke extract:

1. Loaded With Nutrients

Artichokes are packed with powerful nutrients. A medium artichoke (128 grams raw, 120 grams cooked) contains:

	Raw	Cooked (boiled)
Carbs	13.5 grams	14.3 grams
Fiber	6.9 grams	6.8 grams
Protein	4.2 grams	3.5 grams
Fat	0.2 grams	0.4 grams
Vitamin C	25% of the RDI	15% of the RDI
Vitamin K	24% of the RDI	22% of the RDI
Thiamine	6% of the RDI	5% of the RDI
Riboflavin	5% of the RDI	6% of the RDI
Niacin	7% of the RDI	7% of the RDI
Vitamin B6	11% of the RDI	5% of the RDI
Folate	22% of the RDI	27% of the RDI
Iron	9% of the RDI	4% of the RDI
Magnesium	19% of the RDI	13% of the RDI
Phosphorus	12% of the RDI	9% of the RDI
Potassium	14% of the RDI	10% of the RDI
Calcium	6% of the RDI	3% of the RDI
Zinc	6% of the RDI	3% of the RDI

Artichokes are low in fat while rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Particularly high in [folate](#) and vitamins C and K, they also supply important minerals, such as magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and iron.

One medium artichoke contains almost 7 grams of [fiber](#), which is a whopping 23–28% of the reference daily intake (RDI).

2. May Lower ‘Bad’ LDL Cholesterol and Increase ‘Good’ HDL Cholesterol

Artichoke leaf extract may have a positive effect on cholesterol levels.

A large review in over 700 people found that supplementing with artichoke leaf extract daily for 5–13 weeks led to a reduction in total and “bad” LDL cholesterol.

One study in 143 adults with high cholesterol showed that artichoke leaf extract taken daily for six weeks resulted in an 18.5% and 22.9% decrease in total and “bad” LDL cholesterol, respectively.

What’s more, regularly consuming artichoke extract may boost “good” HDL cholesterol in adults with high cholesterol.

Artichoke extract affects cholesterol in two primary ways.

First, artichokes contain luteolin, an antioxidant which prevents cholesterol formation.

Second, artichoke leaf extract encourages your body to process cholesterol more efficiently, leading to lower overall levels.



3. May Help Regulate Blood Pressure

Artichoke extract may aid people with high blood pressure.

One study in 98 men with high blood pressure found that consuming artichoke extract daily for 12 weeks reduced diastolic and systolic blood pressure by an average of 2.76 and 2.85 mmHg, respectively.

In addition, artichokes are a good source of potassium, which helps regulate blood pressure.

4. May Improve Liver Health

Artichoke leaf extract may protect your liver from damage and promote the growth of new tissue.

It also increases the production of bile, which helps remove harmful toxins from your liver.

In one study, artichoke extract given to rats resulted in less liver damage, higher antioxidant levels, and better liver function after an induced drug overdose, compared to rats not given artichoke extract. Studies in humans also show positive effects on liver health. For example, one trial in 90 people with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease revealed that consuming 600 mg of artichoke extract daily for two months led to improved liver function. In another study in obese adults with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, taking artichoke extract daily for two months resulted in reduced liver inflammation and less fat deposition than not consuming artichoke extract.

Scientists think that certain antioxidants found in artichokes — cynarin and silymarin — are partly responsible for these benefits.

5. May Improve Digestive Health

Artichokes are a great source of fiber, which can help keep your digestive system healthy by promoting friendly gut bacteria, reducing your risk of certain bowel cancers, and alleviating constipation and diarrhea.

Artichokes contain inulin, a type of fiber which acts as a prebiotic.

In one study, 12 adults experienced an improvement in gut bacteria when they consumed an artichoke extract containing inulin each day for three weeks.

Artichoke extract may also provide relief from symptoms of indigestion, such as bloating, nausea, and heartburn.

Cynarin, a naturally occurring compound in artichokes, may cause these positive effects by stimulating bile production, accelerating gut movement, and improving the digestion of certain fats.



6. May Ease Symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a condition that affects your digestive system and can cause stomach pain, cramping, diarrhea, bloating, constipation, and flatulence.

In one study in people with IBS, consuming artichoke leaf extract daily for six weeks helped ease symptoms. What's more, 96% of participants rated the extract equally as effective as — if not better than — other IBS treatments, such as antidiarrheals and laxatives. Another study in 208 people with IBS discovered that 1-2 capsules of artichoke leaf extract, consumed daily for two months, reduced symptoms by 26% and improved quality of life by 20%.

Artichoke extract may relieve symptoms in several ways. Certain compounds in artichokes have antispasmodic properties. This means that they can help stop muscle spasms common in IBS, balance gut bacteria, and reduce inflammation.

7. May Help Lower Blood Sugar

Artichokes and artichoke leaf extract may help lower blood sugar levels.

One study in 39 overweight adults found that consuming kidney bean and artichoke extract daily for two months lowered fasting blood sugar levels compared to not supplementing.

Another small study indicated that consuming boiled artichoke at a meal reduced blood sugar and insulin levels 30 minutes after eating. Notably, this effect was only seen in healthy adults who did not have metabolic syndrome.

8. May Have Anticancer Effects

Animal and test-tube studies note that artichoke extract impaired cancer growth.

Certain antioxidants — including rutin, quercetin, silymarin, and gallic acid — in artichokes are thought responsible for these anticancer effects.

For example, silymarin was found to help prevent and treat skin cancer in animal and test-tube studies (36Trusted Source).

How to Add Them to Your Diet

Preparing and cooking artichokes is not as intimidating as it seems.

They can be steamed, boiled, grilled, roasted, or sautéed. You can also prepare them stuffed or breaded, adding spices and other seasonings for an extra burst of flavor.

Steaming is the most popular cooking method and usually takes 20–40 minutes, depending on the size. Alternatively, you can bake artichokes for 40 minutes at 350°F (177°C).

Keep in mind that both the leaves and the heart can be eaten.

Once cooked, the outer leaves can be pulled off and dipped in sauce, such as aioli or herb butter. Simply remove the edible flesh from the leaves by pulling them through your teeth.

Once the leaves are removed, carefully spoon out the fuzzy substance called the choke until you reach the heart. You can then scoop out the heart to eat alone or atop pizza or salad.

Supplement Safety and Dosing

Consuming artichoke extract is generally considered safe, with few side effects reported.

However, there is limited data available. Risks include:

Potential allergies: Some people may be allergic to artichokes and/or artichoke extract. The risk is higher for anyone allergic to plants from the same family, including daisies, sunflowers, chrysanthemums, and marigolds.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women: Pregnant or breastfeeding women are advised to avoid artichoke extract because of a lack of safety information.

People with bile duct obstruction or gallstones: Anyone with these conditions should avoid artichokes and artichoke extract due to their ability to promote bile movement.

There is currently insufficient data to establish dosing guidelines.

However, typical doses used in human research range from 300–640 mg of artichoke leaf extract three times daily.

If you are unsure whether you should take artichoke extract, speak with your doctor for advice.

