

Papayas

Caricaceae



Papayas grow in tropical climates and are also known as papaws or pawpaws. Their sweet taste, vibrant color, and the wide variety of health benefits they provide make them a popular fruit.

The papaya, a previously exotic and rare fruit, is now available at most times of the year.

The possible health benefits of consuming papaya include a reduced risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, aiding in digestion, improving blood glucose control in people with diabetes, lowering blood pressure, and improving wound healing.

Papayas are a soft, fleshy fruit that can be used in a wide variety of culinary ways. Here we will explore more on the health benefits, uses, how to incorporate more of them into your diet, and what nutritional value papayas have.

Fast facts on papaya:

Papaya is native to Mexico. However, it grows naturally in the Caribbean and Florida too.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), India produces the most papayas – over 5 million tons in 2013.

It can be added to salads, smoothies, and other dishes.

Benefits

The nutrients found in papaya are thought to have a range of health benefits. They may help protect against a number of health conditions.

Age-related macular degeneration

Papaya has a range of health benefits including asthma prevention and even anti-cancer properties.

Zeaxanthin, an antioxidant found in papaya, filters out harmful blue light rays.

It is thought to play a protective role in eye health, and it may ward off macular degeneration.

However, a higher intake of all fruits has been shown to decrease the risk of and progression of age-related macular degeneration [Trusted Source](#).



Asthma prevention

The risk of developing asthma is lower in people who consume a high amount of certain nutrients. One of these nutrients is beta-carotene, contained in foods like papaya, apricots, broccoli, cantaloupe, pumpkin, and carrots.

Cancer

Consuming the antioxidant beta-carotene, found in papayas, may reduce cancer risk. Among younger men, diets rich in beta-carotene may play a protective role against prostate cancer, according to a study published in the journal *Cancer Epidemiology and Prevention Biomarkers*.

Bone health

Low intakes of vitamin K have been associated with a higher risk of bone fracture. Adequate vitamin K consumption is important for good health, as it improves calcium absorption and may reduce urinary excretion of calcium, meaning there is more calcium in the body to strengthen and rebuild bones.

Diabetes

Studies have shown that people with type 1 diabetes who consume high-fiber diets have lower blood glucose levels, and people with type 2 diabetes may have improved blood sugar, lipid, and insulin levels. One small papaya provides about 3 grams of fiber, which is equivalent to just 17 grams of carbohydrates.

Digestion

Papayas contain an enzyme called papain that aids digestion; in fact, it can be used as a meat tenderizer. Papaya is also high in fiber and water content, both of which help to prevent constipation and promote regularity and a healthy digestive tract.

Heart disease

The fiber, potassium, and vitamin content in papaya all help to ward off heart disease. An increase in potassium intake along with a decrease in

sodium intake is the most important dietary change that a person can make to reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease.



Inflammation

Choline is a very important and versatile nutrient found in papayas that aids our bodies in sleep, muscle movement, learning, and memory. Choline also helps to maintain the structure of cellular membranes, aids in the transmission of nerve impulses, assists in the absorption of fat, and reduces chronic inflammation.

Skin and healing

When used topically, mashed papaya appears to be beneficial for promoting wound healing and preventing infection of burned areas. Researchers believe that the proteolytic enzymes chymopapain and papain in papaya are responsible for their beneficial effects. Ointments containing the papain enzyme have also been used to treat decubitus ulcers (bedsores).

Hair health

Papaya is also great for hair because it contains vitamin A, a nutrient required for sebum production, which keeps hair moisturized. Vitamin A is also necessary for the growth of all bodily tissues, including skin and hair. Adequate intake of vitamin C, which papaya can provide, is needed for the building and maintenance of collagen, which provides structure to skin.



Nutrition

Papayas are an excellent source of vitamin C, and one single medium fruit provides 224 percent of recommended daily intake.

One medium papaya has approximately:

120 calories

30 grams of carbohydrate – including 5 grams of fiber and 18 grams of sugar

2 grams of protein

Papayas are also a good source of:

folate

vitamin A

magnesium

copper

pantothenic acid

fiber

They also have B vitamins, alpha and beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin, vitamin E, calcium, potassium, vitamin K, and lycopene, the powerful antioxidant most commonly associated with tomatoes.