

The Top

Fruits for **FAST**

Weight Loss



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THE TOP 5 FRUITS FOR FAST WEIGHT LOSS

A number of national and international health organizations laud the benefits associated with a diet rich in colorful fruits and vegetables and recommend that folks increase their consumption to reduce the risk of developing lifestyle-related conditions, including overweight and obesity.¹⁻³ Despite the myriad benefits, many health professionals often recommend that folks limit fruit intake when they're trying to lose weight, and militant health "gurus" may go so far as to suggest the complete elimination of fruit from the diet when trying to optimize fat loss.

But what does the research say? And how might such drastic measures impact your health, vitality, and performance? After all, a good nutrition plan should not only help you look better, it should help you feel and live better as well.

Often, recommendations for fruit intake get grouped together with vegetables, and this can lead folks to believe that the two are synonymous. It is fair to say that fruits and vegetables may not be identical in nutritional value, and as a result, they shouldn't be lumped together in a single category.

For instance, vegetables typically contain fewer calories and carbohydrates per serving than fruits, which contain more naturally-occurring sugar. With that being said, steadily-rising rates of overweight and obesity have far more to do with overconsumption of refined carbohydrates and added sugars than they do with eating too much fruit.⁴

Like vegetables, fruits are rich in important micronutrients (e.g., vitamins and minerals), and they are also packed with important phytochemicals, which act as potent antioxidants that help combat free radicals and reduce oxidative stress. What's more, fruits are also a very good source of dietary fiber, have high water content, and are considered low-energy-dense foods, which means that they contain a relatively low amount of calories for a given unit of food.

All of these factors play a crucial role in optimizing health and weight management. In fact, some studies suggest that how much you eat daily is regulated by the weight of the food rather than by a certain number of calories.⁵ Along those lines, researchers have found that when folks consume low-energy-dense foods, they feel satisfied earlier and those feelings of fullness persist for relatively longer periods of time—despite reductions in calorie intake. In other words, diets rich in low-energy-dense foods like fruits and vegetables allow folks to eat more food, which leads to greater feelings of satiety.

As mentioned, fruit is also a very good source of fiber, which can promote a healthy digestive tract and regularity, improve carbohydrate management (e.g., slowed gastric emptying), promote satiety, reduce calorie intake, and enhance weight loss.⁶ Simply put, fiber is a nutrition all-star, and not surprisingly, researchers have linked low fiber intakes to increased risk for diabetes and obesity.^{7,8} What's more, studies consistently demonstrate that diets higher in fiber help with weight loss and weight management.⁹

Fruits are low-energy-dense foods, rich in important phytochemicals, and packed with satiating fiber, but what does the research say? Is there any evidence that suggests that fruits can help promote weight loss? Absolutely!

In a study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, researchers from Penn State University found that overweight women who focused on increasing their intake of low-energy-dense foods (i.e., fruits and vegetables) lost nearly 25% more weight over the course of one year compared to women who were instructed to follow a reduced-calorie diet alone. The women who focused on eating more fruits and vegetables ended up consuming MORE food (despite consuming fewer calories) and experienced greater satiety. The researchers concluded, “Reducing dietary energy density, particularly by increasing fruit and vegetable intakes, is an effective strategy for managing body weight while controlling hunger.”¹⁰

In another study published in the journal *Nutrition & Diabetes*, researchers found that greater consumption of fruits and vegetables during weight loss efforts is correlated to more weight and fat lost.¹¹ A number of other studies have found an inverse association between fruit and vegetable intake and body weight. In other words, folks who consume more of these low-energy-dense foods weigh less, and these studies demonstrate that advice to increase fruit and vegetable consumption is an effective strategy for weight

management.^{12,13} Further, researchers from the University of Alabama have found that folks who eat more fruits and vegetables are better able to maintain their weight loss progress after achieving their goal weight.¹⁴

As you can tell, many of these studies group fruits and vegetables into a single category, but what about the role of fruits alone in fat loss and weight management? That's precisely what researchers from the University of Denmark set out to uncover in their review published in the journal *Obesity Reviews*, and to the dismay of militant health gurus, the overwhelming majority of the research suggests an inverse relationship between fruit intake and body weight.¹⁵

In one study, researchers from the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota examined the dietary habits of over 1,800 overweight men and women for two years, and they found that increased fruit intake was significantly associated with decreased body weight.¹⁶ In another study published in the journal *Public Health Nutrition*, Dutch researchers analyzed the nutrition habits of 288 men between the ages of 50 and 65 for five years, and they found that decreased fruit intake was significantly related to increased body weight and waist circumference.¹⁷

In a study published in the journal *Appetite*, researchers from Brazil compared the effects of adding fruit (i.e., apples or pears) or oats to the diets of overweight women on calorie consumption and body weight. Over the course of 10 weeks, the researchers found that women who added three daily servings of fruit to their usual diets lost over 5 times more weight than women who added oats, despite the same number of calories and fiber in the fruit and oats.¹⁸

In a recent study published in *Nutrition Journal*, researchers from Denmark played devil's advocate to see if removing fruit from the diets of participants would aid in weight loss. No such luck. Not only did the researchers find that the low-fruit group (i.e., no more than 1 piece per day) didn't lose more weight than the high-fruit group (i.e., 2 pieces or more per day), they found that the folks in the high-fruit group lost 47% more weight and 43% more inches from their waistlines than the low-fruit group.¹⁹

With all of that being said, it seems both prudent and pragmatic to incorporate fruit in your nutrition plan when your goal is to optimize fat loss, and with that in mind, we'd like

to share with you some of the top fruit choices to help you accelerate your weight loss progress. While we've narrowed down the list to five fat-burning fruits, keep in mind that nearly all whole, fresh fruits are low-energy-dense foods that provide important vitamins and minerals, fat-fighting phytochemicals, and satiating fiber.

Thus, your favorite fruit may have not made the list, but that doesn't mean it's still not a great option. Also, it's important to recognize that the emphasis here is on whole, fresh fruits—not store-bought fruit juices or dried fruits, which tend to contain significantly more calories (i.e., high-energy-dense foods) and *added* sugar as well as less fiber. Frozen fruits without added sugars and artificial ingredients are also perfectly acceptable options; in fact, in certain instances, they may be the best option considering geographical location and the time of year.

Lastly, while the following sections highlight unique attributes of single foods, bear in mind that, in the grand scheme of things, your health and weight loss are contingent on your entire body of “nutrition work.” In other words, instead of viewing foods in isolation as “good” or “bad,” think about weight management and “deep health” as the product of practicing a high-quality nutrition plan and healthy eating habits regularly and consistently.

Avocados

Also known as the “Alligator Pear,” the avocado is a climacteric fruit, which means that it matures on the tree but ripens off of it. The avocado is a nutrient-dense fruit, containing upwards of 20 essential nutrients—which are crucial to optimizing your health and stoking your fat-burning furnace—including fiber, vitamin K, folate, vitamin B6, vitamin C, vitamin E, pantothenic acid, potassium, riboflavin, and niacin. Avocados are rife in monounsaturated fats (MUFAs), including oleic acid, which seems to have a potent impact on appetite regulation.

Researchers from the University of California Irvine found that oleic acid stimulates the production of a compound called oleoylethanolamide (OEA) by the cells of the small intestine.²⁰ OEA helps to suppress appetite by activating specific sites in the brain that help to curb hunger. Previously, this group of researchers found that increasing OEA levels reduces appetite, increases weight loss, and improves various metabolic parameters.²¹

According to research recently published in *Nutrition Journal*, eating avocado with a meal significantly improves satisfaction and reduces the desire to snack in the hours after eating.²² Specifically, researchers found that participants who consumed half of an avocado with their lunch reported a 23% increase in meal satisfaction, a 40% decrease in their desire to eat during the three hours after their lunch, and a 28% decrease in the desire to eat 5 hours afterward.

What's more, the authors of the study noted significantly improved insulin efficiency, suggesting that avocados may help improve carbohydrate management, another very important factor when trying to lose fat.

Observational studies suggest that regular avocado consumption is associated with better diet quality, nutrient intake, and overall metabolic health. In another study published in *Nutrition Journal*, researchers examined the dietary habits of over 17,000 men and women, and they found that those folks who regularly consumed avocados were more likely to have a lower body weight, body mass index (BMI), and waist circumference.²³

If that's not enough, research shows that consuming avocados alongside vegetables can dramatically improve the absorption of important fat-fighting phytochemicals, which combat oxidative stress, a process associated with aging and obesity.^{24–27}

In a study published in the *Journal of Nutrition*, researchers from Ohio State University found that when they added avocado or avocado oil to salsa the absorption of phytochemicals was up to four times higher than when the salsa was avocado-free. If that's not enough, when avocado was added to salads, the researchers found that absorption of these potent antioxidants was up to 15 times higher than when the salads were consumed avocado-free.²⁸

Blueberries

The health benefits of blueberries, with their dark pigment indicative of their rich polyphenol content, have been demonstrated in various nutrition studies. Research suggests that these nutritional powerhouses may have cardioprotective effects as well as benefits ranging from anti-aging to optimized metabolic health.

Researchers from Texas Women’s University recently demonstrated that the polyphenols in blueberries might play a significant role in reducing body fat. Specifically, the researchers found that these compounds inhibited the formation of fat cells.²⁹

What’s more, researchers from New Zealand found that consumption of blueberries may also accelerate muscle recovery when combined with exercise. Specifically, folks who consumed a blueberry smoothie before and after exercise experienced reduced muscle soreness and accelerated recovery of strength, which translates to more frequent exercise and improved performance.³⁰ That also adds up to helping prevent the loss of calorie-burning muscle when dieting. Simply put, muscle loss contributes to decreased metabolism, looking “skinny fat,” and rapid rebound weight gain when resuming a “normal” eating routine after a diet—all things you don’t want.

Anthocyanins, the colorful antioxidant pigments blueberries their rich color, are well-known for their wide-ranging health benefits, including optimizing carbohydrate metabolism and insulin sensitivity. Specifically, cyanidin 3-glucoside (C3G), which is a member of the anthocyanin family, has been shown to enhance insulin efficiency and improve carbohydrate metabolism, both of which have major implications for optimizing fat loss and weight management.^{31,32}

What’s more, anthocyanins have been shown to have a unique effect on fat cells, and this has led researchers to state that they may play an intricate role in improving metabolic health. As a matter of fact, researchers investigating the effects of anthocyanins on fat cells (i.e., adipocytes) concluded, “Anthocyanins have a significant potency of antiobesity and ameliorate adipocyte function” and they also have “important implications for preventing metabolic syndrome.”³³

The myriad benefits associated with blueberries may also be extended to other dark-colored berries, which also contain a wealth of antioxidant phytochemicals and appetite-satisfying fiber.

Apples

If you only look at the nutrition facts of an apple, you may be underwhelmed. While apples are a very good source of fiber (including both soluble and insoluble pectin)

and vitamin C, they do not contain significant amounts of other vitamins and minerals. However, what apples lack in those micronutrients, they more than makes up for in their fat-fighting polyphenol content, including the following:

- Flavonols, including quercetin
- Catechins, including epicatechin
- Anthocyanins (in red-skinned apples)
- Chlorogenic acid
- Phloridizin and more

Research on the polyphenols in apples has demonstrated some significant benefits in terms of carbohydrate metabolism:

- Quercetin has been shown to inhibit digestive enzymes like alpha-amylase and alpha-glucosidase, which are responsible for breaking down carbohydrates into absorbable sugars. Quercetin has been shown to be effective at reducing blood sugar after a meal.³⁴
- The polyphenols, phenolic acids, and tannins in apples have been shown to reduce the absorption of carbohydrates in the small intestine.³⁵
- Apple polyphenols have also been shown to enhance insulin sensitivity and efficiency, promoting the uptake of carbohydrates into muscle cells to be stored as energy.³⁶

In addition to the potential improvements in insulin sensitivity and carbohydrate metabolism, the polyphenols in apples appear to confer significant health benefits in gut health.³⁷ In lab animals, scientists have found that consumption of polyphenol-rich apples resulted in positive changes in the gut microbiota and improvements in immune system function.³⁸

When it comes to the battle of the bulge, one of the more important factors to consider is satiety, which refers to feeling satisfied (not hungry). Thus, when trying to control calories (i.e., negative energy balance), it's important to choose foods that have a high satiety value.

Some researchers refer to satiety as the “new diet weapon,” and knowing the importance of

feeling full, Dr. Susanna Holt and her team at the University of Sydney set out to establish a satiety index of common foods.³⁹ In the study, the researchers fed folks fixed-calorie portions of thirty-eight different foods and recorded their levels of hunger following each.

The results of the study, like many similar studies, indicate that satiety is most strongly related to the weight of the food consumed. In other words, the foods that weigh the most satisfy hunger best, regardless of the number of calories they contain. According to Dr. Holt and the satiety index, apples ranked amongst the top five foods tested.

According to the Environmental Working Group, conventional apples top the list of the most pesticide-contaminated produce. With all of that in mind, apples can indeed be a healthy component of a satiating nutrition plan, but because many of the health-promoting nutrients are located in the skin of the apple, it may be wise to opt for organic when possible.

Bananas

Typically you'll see bananas on a list of foods not to eat when it comes to fat loss. However, if you banish this fruit, you may be missing out on some very important fat-burning nutrients.

In addition to being a rich source of potassium, bananas are also a very good source of the following essential nutrients:

- Vitamin B6
- Vitamin C
- Fiber
- Manganese
- Biotin
- Copper

Of particular note, bananas are one of the best dietary sources of resistant starch, which is a special type of carbohydrate that is not digested by the human body.⁴⁰ Resistant starch is not technically classified as a fiber, although many researchers now believe that it should be. Thus, with nearly 5 grams of resistant starch per banana, the net (i.e., usable) carbohydrate content is actually considerably lower than one may think.

Multiple studies have shown that naturally-occurring resistant starch intake increases satiety and reduces food intake both acutely and in the long-term.^{41,42} Research has also shown that consumption of resistant starch increases fat burning, decreases fat storage, and improves insulin sensitivity.^{43,44}

That's not all; researchers speculate that resistant starch may also increase the thermic effect of feeding, which means that it boosts the metabolism, as well as promote weight loss and preserve calorie-burning muscle.⁴⁵

In addition to resistant starch, bananas also contain a special type of fiber called prebiotics.⁴⁶ A prebiotic is defined as “a non-digestible food ingredient that beneficially affects the host by selectively stimulating the growth and/or activity of one or a limited number of bacteria in the colon, and thus improves host health.”⁴⁷ In other words, prebiotics preferentially stimulate the growth of beneficial bacteria in the digestive tract.

This is important for a wide variety of reasons because gut bacteria—and more importantly, an optimal balance of healthy gut bacteria—play a tremendous role in digestive system health and function, overall health, immune system function, wellbeing, metabolism, the respiratory (i.e., lungs) and integumentary (i.e., skin) systems, and more.

With regard to fat loss, the evidence that gut bacteria contribute to energy balance (or, weight management) is so strong that Dr. Patrice Cani and her colleagues at the Metabolism and Nutrition Research Group in Belgium have coined the term “MicrObesity” to describe the relationship between gut “dysbiosis” and obesity.⁴⁸

Amongst the many fascinating discoveries that researchers have found connecting gut bacteria to weight management include:

- A research team led by Dr. Jeffrey Gordon at the Washington University School of Medicine showed that obese and lean human twins have clear differences in their gut microbial communities. Most notably, the gut flora in obese twins contains less diverse bacterial species.⁴⁹
- Not only that, Dr. Gordon and his research team demonstrated that when fecal material (rich in gut bacteria) from an obese human is transplanted into the gut of a healthy lab rat, the animal will gain a significant amount of weight despite the

fact that its diet remains unchanged.⁴⁹

- In a study performed at the Obesity, Metabolism & Nutritional Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital, researchers found that changes in the gut flora are partially responsible for the weight loss and reduced body fat observed in mice following gastric bypass surgery.⁵⁰

With that in mind, taking steps to improve the balance of healthy gut bacteria—which includes providing important support nutrients like the prebiotic fiber found in bananas—has serious implications for reducing body fat and optimizing weight management.

So, let's see...burn more fat and store less; partition more carbs to your muscles for energy and store fewer as body fat; increase satiety and better manage your appetite; boost your metabolism and preserve calorie-burning lean muscle; promote an optimal balance of healthy gut bacteria...do those seem like things that you might be interested in?

Grapefruit

While the media has publicized grapefruits as an effective —yet largely unsubstantiated—strategy for weight loss for decades, there's actually quite a bit of science to support the notion. Like oranges, another superstar citrus fruit worthy of making this list, grapefruits are an excellent source of vitamin C. In fact, when comparing whole fruits, grapefruits contain about 26% more of this key micronutrient.

In one study, German researchers found that, when faced with a stressful situation (e.g., public speaking), healthy young adults who supplemented with vitamin C experienced reduced blood pressure, a decreased stress response, and significant reductions in the hormone cortisol.⁵¹

Cortisol is one of the body's primary stress hormones, and it can have a significant impact on fat loss and weight gain. In fact, cortisol is associated with increased abdominal fat storage.⁵² Intra-abdominal fat is also referred to as visceral fat, which is detrimental to overall health and is associated with a constellation of metabolic abnormalities.⁵³

In addition to its vitamin C content, grapefruits are also a good source of fiber, which

helps slow gastric emptying and increase satiety (i.e., feelings of fullness). What's more, grapefruits have a very high water content (~91%), and subsequently, they are considered a low-energy-dense food. As you already know, these are important factors that play a significant role in appetite control and weight management. In fact, consuming low-energy-dense foods increases feelings of fullness and reduces calorie intake.⁵⁴

In one study published in the journal *Nutrition & Metabolism*, researchers from Vanderbilt found that when folks added half of a grapefruit (before breakfast, lunch, and dinner) to a reduced-calorie diet they ended up consuming up to 500 fewer calories per day—without any increase in hunger—which had a tremendous impact on weight loss. With the addition of grapefruit, the participants' rate of weight loss increased by over 13% compared to when they were following a reduced-calorie diet without the fruit.⁵⁵

In another study published in the *Journal of Medicinal Food*, researchers from the Scripps Clinic in California found that overweight folks consuming fresh grapefruit three times daily before meals lost 5 TIMES more weight than the placebo group (i.e., no grapefruit) over the course of 12 weeks. Not only that, the researchers also found that the addition of grapefruit significantly improved insulin sensitivity, which is intimately tied to carbohydrate metabolism and weight management.^{56,57}

Grapefruit has one more trick up its sleeve: Naringin, which is a potent antioxidant that helps protect cells from free radicals.⁵⁸ Free radicals lead to oxidative stress, which is associated with aging, reduced carbohydrate tolerance, and obesity.

In the body, naringin is broken down into naringenin, a compound that has been shown to activate an important enzyme called AMPK, which facilitates the uptake of carbohydrates into muscles to be used for energy (instead of being stored as fat).^{59–61} If that's not enough, naringenin has also been shown to reduce a process called adipogenesis—a fancy name for the creation of new fat cells—as well as increase fat burning.^{62,63}

Busting Another Myth

As you can see, whole, fresh fruits can indeed help optimize fat burning and weight management. In fact, with their low-energy-density, fat-fighting phytochemicals, and

satiating fiber, fruits appear to provide a variety of potential benefits to help accelerate fat loss. Adding fruit to your nutrition plan may help improve appetite control; reduce calorie intake; optimize metabolic health; enhance insulin sensitivity and carbohydrate management; increase fat burning and reduce fat storage; and promote an optimal balance of healthy gut bacteria.

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