

FEBRUARY 2023 // SHEVAT 5783 // ISSUE 85

WELLSPRING

THE HEALTH MAGAZINE FOR THE JEWISH FAMILY



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Ask Laura Shammah

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SEVEN SPECIES

IN HONOR OF TU B'SHEVAT, LET'S EXPLORE THE NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS OF THE SHIVAS HAMINIM, THE SEVEN SPECIES THAT ERETZ YISRAEL IS BLESSED WITH.

BY ESTI ASHER, MS, RDN, LD



Wheat

For those who can comfortably tolerate it, wheat is a beneficial component of a healthy and well-balanced diet. When consuming wheat products, it's ideal to choose mostly whole grains with minimal processing. Whole wheat, along with other whole grains, is a great source of fiber (which is helpful for digestive and cardiovascular health) and many minerals, such as selenium, magnesium, iron, zinc, copper, and phosphorus. The type and quality of minerals are dependent on the soil the wheat is grown in, as well as climate and agricultural practices.



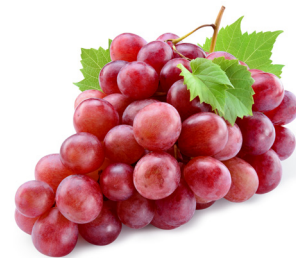
Barley

Often consumed on a weekly basis in cholent, barley offers many health benefits. One of its most unique and outstanding benefits is its soluble fiber, which has been shown to help lower levels of cholesterol, maintain a stable blood sugar level, and also control appetite due to its satiety factor.



Figs

Despite this species being less commonly consumed than most of the others, figs deserve a special highlight in the world of bone health. Technically speaking, figs are a cluster of inverted flowers and seeds within a stem. Figs were historically used to sweeten foods, long before sugar became popular. Furthermore, figs are high in potassium, fiber, and calcium, to name a few. Both potassium and calcium work together to help improve bone density, which can help prevent bone diseases such as osteoporosis.



Grapes

A delicious, versatile, and favored snack among many, grapes have a nice bunch of nutritional benefits. They are a great source of potassium, which can help balance body fluids and promote heart health. They also contain a plant compound called resveratrol, which helps the body by boosting the immune system and slowing down the breakdown of cells that occurs as we age, among other benefits.



Pomegranates

One of the most widely acclaimed “super-fruits,” pomegranates boast a plethora of outstanding health benefits. They are particularly rich in antioxidants and flavonoids, which can prevent free radicals from harming cells. In addition, pomegranates are high in vitamin C, fiber, manganese, folate, and thiamine. Studies have shown that pomegranates may help lower one's risk of cancer, promote diabetes control, reduce cholesterol and blood pressure, and stabilize blood sugar levels, and other benefits.



Olives

Olives are rich in vitamin E, a fat-soluble vitamin that is known to help improve skin health and help the immune system. The vitamins and antioxidants found in olives may protect against health conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Olives are also an excellent source of copper, calcium, iron, and vitamin A.



Dates

Chewy, sticky, and delicious, dates not only satisfy a sweet tooth but are also high in vitamins and nutrients and are an exceptional component of your diet. Phytonutrients found within dates have been shown to help the immune system, prevent DNA damage, improve hormone regulation, and reduce inflammation. Their high fiber content may also help you feel full longer, reduce your risk of heart disease, and promote healthy digestion.

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Maternal Mediterranean Diet May Decrease Preeclampsia

A study from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, recently published in the peer-reviewed journal *JAMA Network Open*, determined that women who were following a Mediterranean-style diet benefited from a decrease in risk of many adverse pregnancy outcomes. Different associations were evaluated, including gestational diabetes, hypertension, delivery of a small-for-gestational-age infant, and preterm. The study was part of the Nulliparous Pregnancy Outcomes Study, which enrolled 10,038 women.

Women were asked to complete a questionnaire that focused on eating habits, and researchers then further categorized food choices into nine components of a Mediterranean diet: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, fish, legumes, monounsaturated-to-saturated fat ratio, red and processed meats, and alcohol. Mediterranean diet scores were then calculated and analyzed. The most significant outcome seen was a 28 percent lower risk for preeclampsia among mothers who followed a healthier eating pattern. Interestingly, there was a stronger association in women who were 35 or older, which experts consider an advanced maternal age. The key components of the Mediterranean diet that were related to lower associated risk of negative pregnancy outcome included fish, legumes, and vegetables.

Broccoli for Bone Health

We've been told that leafy greens are good for us, but often with an emphasis on how they can improve our heart health and digestion. While that is certainly true, a new study has discovered another promising benefit of green leafy vegetables. Researchers from Edith Cowan University, in collaboration with the University of Western Australia, set out to determine the relationship between fracture-related hospitalizations and the intake of vitamin K1.

Almost 1,400 older Australian women were included in this study over a 14.5-year period. After analysis, researchers found that women who ate more than 100 micrograms of vitamin K1 on a daily basis (equal to approximately 1–2 servings of green leafy vegetables) were 31 percent less likely to have any fracture and 49 percent less likely to suffer from a hip fracture. This phenomenon may be explained by the effect of vitamin K1 on osteocalcin, which is understood to improve bone strength. Vitamin K1 may also inhibit different bone-resorbing agents. Vitamin K1-containing vegetables include broccoli, cabbage, spinach, and kale. ♥