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THE ROAD TO HEALTH & WELLNESS

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PERSONAL TRAINING AND FITNESS SOLUTIONS

In every issue

David Trumbore
PT, DPT, CSCI, CWT, CPI, CFNP

SCAN ME

Gratitude

Introduction

Thanksgiving is just right around the corner so November is a great month to consider gratitude. Simply defined, gratitude is a conscious, positive emotion expressed when we are thankful for something or someone. Check out the references at the end of this article. Research confirms that there are tremendous benefits to being grateful.

Gratitude is Good Medicine.

Are gratitude and thankfulness the same thing? Not exactly. What separates gratitude from thankfulness is intention. Gratitude is a quality of thankfulness. It's something you intentionally choose to focus on and practice, which means you don't just feel it, you do something about it.

Benefits of Practicing Gratitude

Gratitude can increase the levels of the brain's feel-good chemicals, such as dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin. These neurochemicals are associated with feelings of connection, closeness, and happiness.

Gratitude helps keep glucose levels under control. Practicing gratitude has led to lower levels of hemoglobin A1C, which is a glucose control indicator that helps in the diagnosis of diabetes. According to one study, grateful individuals saw their A1C levels decrease by 9-13%.

Gratitude improves pain tolerance. Studies show that the daily practice of gratitude helps lessen an individual's sensitivity to pain. According to Bruce F. Singer, a psychologist and founding director of the Chronic Pain and Recovery Center, the practice of gratitude may not completely eliminate chronic pain, but it does shift the focus away from physical pain and on to more positive things instead.

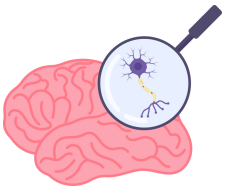
Gratitude is associated with higher levels of good cholesterol (HDL), lower levels of bad cholesterol (LDL), and lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure, both at rest and in the face of stress. It also has been linked with higher levels of heart rate variability, a marker of cardiac coherence (a state of harmony in the nervous system and heart rate that is equated with mental clarity and reduced stress).

Gratitude lowers levels of creatinine, an indicator of the kidney's ability to filter waste from the bloodstream, and lowers levels of C-reactive protein, a marker of cardiac inflammation and heart disease.

Need more proof that gratitude works?

Check out these results reported by the University of California, Davis:

- Keeping a gratitude diary for two weeks produced sustained reductions in perceived stress (28 percent) and depression (16 percent) in health-care practitioners.
- Gratitude is related to 23 percent lower levels of stress hormones (cortisol).
- Practicing gratitude led to a 7-percent reduction in biomarkers of inflammation in patients with congestive heart failure.
- Two gratitude activities (counting blessings and gratitude letter writing) reduced the risk of depression in at-risk patients by 41 percent over a six-month period.



- Dietary fat intake was reduced by as much as 25 percent when people kept a gratitude journal rather than a food journal.
- A daily gratitude practice can decelerate the effects of neurodegeneration (as measured by a 9 percent increase in verbal fluency) that occurs with increasing age.

- Grateful patients with Stage B asymptomatic heart failure were 16 percent less depressed, 20 percent less fatigued and 18 percent more likely to believe they could control the symptoms of their illness compared to those less grateful.

- Writing a letter of gratitude reduced feelings of hopelessness in 88 percent of suicidal inpatients and increased levels of optimism in 94 percent of them.

- Gratitude is related to a 10 percent improvement in sleep quality in patients with chronic pain, 76 percent of whom had insomnia, and 19 percent lower depression levels.

Summary

An ungrateful attitude is detrimental to your mental and physical health. Science supports the value of practicing gratitude. We know that gratitude can help lower blood pressure, improve immune function and facilitate more efficient sleep. In addition, it reduces the lifetime risk for depression, anxiety and substance abuse disorders.

Each of us experience painful, difficult and stressful situations that we must deal with. It's so easy to focus on things that are negative but when we camp out here it becomes a drain of time and energy. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude takes practice, but there are always things to be thankful for. Focusing on them can improve your health and well-being.

The EPT staff are very thankful to work in a field we love. We are grateful for the opportunity to share our passion for health and fitness with you. Thank you for choosing us. May you reap the many rewards that come from having a grateful heart.

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Research Shows

Including pumpkin in the diet may help people control diabetes and their blood sugar levels. A 2019 study showed that a combination of two plant extracts, one of which was pumpkin polysaccharides, brought down blood sugar levels in mice.

Although the study did not involve humans, the research shows some potential for these plant compounds to limit type 2 diabetes. Due to their impact on blood sugar, scientists may be able to rework them into an antidiabetic medication, though further studies are necessary.

Did You Know...

The original TV dinner was the result of a Thanksgiving miscalculation. In 1953, an executive at Swanson miscalculated the company's upcoming Thanksgiving turkey sales, leaving the company with some 260 tons of frozen fowl following the holiday. Fortunately for Swanson, a salesman by the name of Gerry Thomas suggested packaging the excess product into trays—along with some traditional sides—and selling them to consumers as TV dinners. Thomas was apparently inspired by the pre-portioned trays used to serve airplane food.

Food For Thought: Cranberries

Introduction

Fresh cranberries are ready to harvest from mid-September through mid-November, so Thanksgiving falls within that perfect window for eating them. Though we tend to associate cranberries with the holidays, there are good reasons to consume them year-round, frozen, dried, or in juice form.

Cranberry sauce was loosely described in accounts from the American colonies in the 1600s and appeared in a cookbook for the first time in 1796. The berries' tart flavor, which comes from high levels of several types of acids, makes them more than twice as acidic as most other edible fruits, so they add a welcome zing to a meal full of blander foods like turkey and potatoes.

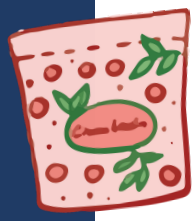
Benefits

Fresh or dried, cranberries contain vitamin C, which acts as an antioxidant and is important in many critical body functions such as wound healing and protein metabolism. Cranberries also contain manganese, vitamin K, and vitamin E, a fat-soluble antioxidant.

Like other brightly- colored fruits and vegetables, cranberries contain antioxidant compounds. Antioxidants are known to repair damage caused to cells by free radicals in the body, thus helping prevent inflammation and oxidative stress. The primary active antioxidant compound in cranberries are proanthocyanidins which contributes to the brilliant red color.

Food For Thought: Cranberries

Cranberries also contain D-mannose, a nondigestible sugar. This has been researched in humans and animals to help prevent urinary tract infections in women.
It potentially interferes with bacterial adherence in the lining of the uterus.
Commonly UTIs are caused by infection from E. coli.



Cranberries are available raw, fresh or frozen.

Raw cranberries (fresh or frozen) are high in nutritional value and fiber while being low in carbohydrates and calories. Dried cranberries (often known as "Craisins," a brand name), however, can be quite different. Since cranberries are so tart, most dried versions have added sugar.

How To Enjoy Cranberries

Look for unsweetened 100% cranberry juice to take advantage of cranberry benefits. Because cranberries are bitter, manufacturers often add sugar or syrup or combine the juice with a sweet variety, like apple juice. You can add pure cranberry juice or frozen cranberries to your morning smoothie or use the juice with lightly sweetened almond milk as the liquid in oatmeal or overnight oats.

Frozen cranberries taste great warmed over low heat on the stovetop in a bit of 100% orange juice with a touch of maple syrup, freshly grated ginger root, cinnamon, and cloves. Unsweetened or 100% fruit juice-sweetened dried cranberries can be folded into nut butter, tossed onto salads or add to energy balls and "bark" made from melted dark chocolate and nuts.

Food for Thought and Recipe contributed by Lynette Jernigan, Clinical Director of Nutrition Services and Director of Business Development at EPT.

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The genetics of organic acids variation in cranberry fruit (rutgers.edu)

EPT RECIPES

CRANBERRY SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Cups cranberries (fresh or frozen)
- 1 Cup apple cider
- 1/3 Cup pitted dates
- 1t vanilla extract
- Optional adds: 1/2t orange zest, 1/4t cinnamon and/or nutmeg, blueberries, chopped pecans or walnuts

DIRECTIONS

1. Add **cranberries, apple cider, dates** and optional **spices/zest** to a medium pot.
2. Bring to a boil over **medium-high heat**.
3. Reduce to a **simmer**. Cook until most of the cranberries pop and break down (Approximately 15-20 minutes.)
4. Remove from heat and add **vanilla**.
5. Once cooled, blend half to all of the sauce in a blender or with an immersion blender depending on your texture preference.

EPT PRO TIPS & FUN FACTS

- Try orange juice instead of apple cider.
- Add thyme or rosemary for a savory twist. (Leave out the vanilla.)
- Replace the takeout and make your own turkey bowl / sandwiches!