



Eating Blueberries Linked to Blood Pressure



Blueberries can help people control pre-hypertensive and stage 1-hypertensive blood pressure.

Florida State University researchers found that daily consumption of blueberries results in dramatic reductions of systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

The study was published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* and surveyed 48 women to participate in an eight-week trial. One group of women were fed a cup freeze-dried blueberry powder, equal to one cup of fresh blueberries, as part of their daily diet. Another group of women were given a placebo without blueberry powder.

Researchers found that the blueberry powder improved blood pressure and arterial stiffness, and noted improvement in the women suffering pre-hypertension and stage-1 hypertension after eight weeks of eating blueberry powder.

“To our knowledge, this is the first investigation to evaluate the effects of blueberries on arterial function, as was done in this study, as well as in this study population,” said co-author Bahram H. Arjmandi, professor at the College of Human Sciences at Florida State University. “These findings suggest that blueberries may prevent the progression to full-blown hypertension.”

Sarah Johnson, lead researcher and assistant director at the College of Human Sciences at Florida State University, was impressed by the results. “The recommended intervention for controlling blood pressure in pre- and stage 1-hypertensive individuals is not pharmaceutical interventions, but rather lifestyle modifications,” Johnson said. “This is evidence that many cases of hypertension can be prevented and treated through diet and lifestyle changes.”

Among all edible fruits, blueberries have been found to be one of the richest sources of phenolic compounds, which increase biological activity and have lots of antioxidants.

Eating blueberries in significant quantities increased the amount of nitric oxide in the bloodstream of the groups. Researchers believe that increase vasodilation in the groups, which helped lower blood pressure overall. Blueberries are a promising functional food and require more study, said Johnson.

“The changes in blood pressure noted in this study are of clinical significance, as they demonstrate that blood pressure can be favourably altered by the addition of a single dietary component,” she concluded. The survey was published in the March 2015 issue of the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.

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Published on : Mon, 12 Jan 2015