



Nutrition News - September 2021

The Wonderful Watermelon

When you think of a typical watermelon, you probably picturing the classic green striped oblong, or the slice of red with black seeds and a white/green rind. That's the classic dessert watermelon. As for other common types of watermelons, there are a lot more than you probably realize.

While many watermelon varieties can look similar on the outside, their flesh can come in a rainbow of colors, including red, pink, orange, yellow, or even white. Watermelon rinds are typically green, but don't always have stripes. All varieties come in round or oblong shapes (when they're not crammed into growing boxes for aesthetics). The three most popular types include Icebox, Picnic, or Seedless.

Choosing a Ripe Watermelon

At the store, you'll usually find whole watermelons arranged together in a display within the produce section. They should each have a light yellow "field spot," which indicates the part that was touching the ground when the watermelon was ripening. If that spot is white instead of yellow, that tells you it was probably picked too early, and may not taste quite as ripe and juicy as others. Other senses also come in handy when choosing a good watermelon. A ripe melon should sound deep, full, and hollow when you gently knock on it. On the opposite end from the stem, the rind should also have some give when pressed with your fingers. And when you hold the watermelon, it should feel heavy for its size, thanks to its high water content. Look for watermelons that are free from obvious bruises, cuts, or dents, as these can shorten their lifespan. It's also important to

choose a size that will best serve your needs and how quickly you'll be able to eat it, as watermelons can vary from fairly small to very, very large.

The Best Ways to Store Your Watermelon

When you get your watermelon home, store the whole uncut fruit in a cool, dry place. Keep it separate from other countertop fruits and veggies to prevent premature ripening from ethylene gas emitted by other produce like bananas. If you want to chill it before eating it, you can put the watermelon in the fridge for long enough to get it cold. Watermelons, in their whole form, keep best at room temperature. Store them at around 55°F, where they will keep for at least 7-10 days.

Once the melon is cut open, move it to the refrigerator in a sealed container, where it's good for another four to seven days. Freezing watermelon isn't recommended, as this causes the rind to break down and produces a mealy, mushy texture that most people don't enjoy.

The watermelon is known to be mighty in size and shape, but also, in its potential health benefits. Some of the top health benefits of watermelon include helping weight loss, protecting against heart disease, anticancer and antioxidant properties, and supporting athletic performance. Read on for five ways watermelon is great for the aging senior.

1. It may help you lose weight

Watermelon is rich in water and fiber, which help fill you up when you eat it. These nutrients can reduce appetite and potentially prevent overeating that would otherwise contribute to unwanted weight gain. Watermelon seeds are also edible, though the immature white seeds may be easier to chew than the mature black ones. Still, watermelon seeds are high in minerals like

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Wonderful Watermelon (continued)

magnesium, iron, and zinc. In one study, among 33 overweight/obese adults, researchers found that eating two cups of watermelon daily for four weeks led to a significant reduction in body weight, body mass index, and waist-to-hip ratio. This was compared to the effects of another group who consumed isocaloric, (meaning, the same number of calories as the watermelon) low-fat cookies daily for four weeks instead — which led to an increase in body fat.

2. It may protect against heart disease.

Watermelon is high in compounds that may reduce inflammation, offer antioxidant effects, and help improve lipid profiles. Additionally, eating watermelon has been observed to help increase the synthesis of nitric oxide, a colorless gas that dilates your blood vessels and helps prevent blockages.

3 and 4. It may have anticancer properties and treat ulcerative colitis.

Eating plenty of naturally antioxidant-rich foods is one way that you can help your body better defend itself against cancer. Ulcerative colitis (UC) is an inflammatory bowel disease characterized by widespread inflammation throughout the digestive tract. It's a risk factor for colorectal cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and psoriasis. Some research has found that watermelon can help with UC by increasing antioxidant activity and alleviating inflammation.

5. It may be good for your skin

Antioxidants, like the lycopene in watermelon, may help minimize wrinkles and slow other aging effects related to UV damage.

Let's Clear Up A Myth

No, watermelon seeds won't grow inside you if you eat them. It's difficult enough to grow watermelon from seed in ideal conditions outdoors!

Wonderful Watermelon Recipes

Watermelon slices are the most traditional way to enjoy this fruit, but there are several other ways to make the most of yours.

- Cut the flesh into chunks, or use a melon baller, and add them to a mixed green or fruit salad
- Add them to smoothies
- Make ice cream or popsicles by blending them with coconut milk and other fruits you like, such as frozen bananas
- Make watermelon chunks into grilled fruit skewers, along with honeydew melon, orange, grapefruit slices, and even berries
- Use it in cold soups like gazpacho
- Make it into a salad dressing, like a vinaigrette
- Blend it into mocktails, or throw cubes of it into regular water to give it a refreshing melon flavor
- Make watermelon salsa, combining cubes with onion, cilantro, salt, lime, and some diced jalapeno for a little kick

Enjoy watermelon seeds roasted or sprouted at home. You can throw them on your salads for extra crunch, and some people even enjoy them on their oatmeal. If you're into no-waste fruit, even the watermelon rind is edible when pickled. The process is similar to pickling other produce like cucumbers or carrots, where you cut the rind into chunks and use a flavorful pickling liquid to create a unique snack.

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