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Koslo's Korner

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Contributor

Cherries are one of those delectable fruits of summer that not only taste good, but have so many health benefits that they should be an essential part of any endurance athletes' nutrition plan.

There is a significant body of research suggesting that cherries are one of the most nutritious foods you can eat. Cherries contain anthocyanins 1 and 2 which are powerful antioxidants that not only give cherries their distinctive red color but also have an impact on relieving muscle and joint soreness similar to how non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs act. Cherries are the highest in these compounds compared to various other berries including strawberries and blueberries and they also contain a hefty dose of beta carotene, vitamin C, potassium, magnesium, iron, fiber and folate. One cup of fresh cherries has just about 90 calories, no fat, 22 grams of carbohydrates and 3 grams of fiber.

Additionally, cherries are one of the few food sources of melatonin, an antioxidant which helps to regulate the body's natural sleep patterns. Eating cherries can be a natural way to increase melatonin levels in the blood acting to hasten sleep and ease jet lag. New evidence also links cherries to heart health and weight management.

So how many cherries do you need to eat to get the benefits? While there are no established guidelines as of yet, experts suggest that consuming 1-2 servings of cherries a day can provide some of the health benefits identified in the research. Examples of what constitutes a serving includes: ½ cup dried; 1 cup frozen; 1 cup 100% juice; 1 ounce concentrate.

Try these tips to help speed your recovery:

- Drink 10 oz of tart cherry juice pre-workout
- Make a post-workout smoothie with frozen cherries
- Add dried cherries to your post-workout oatmeal
- Have dried cherries as a good grab-and-go snack
- Add dried cherries to a spinach salad with walnuts
- Create a yogurt parfait with vanilla yogurt, granola and dried cherries
- Swap your soda for 100% cherry juice

References:

1. Cherries (2010). Choose cherries.com
2. Zboraj, M. (2009). Cherry nutrition report reveals the many health benefits found in cherries. www.nutraceuticalsworld.com

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Have a nutrition question? Email it to: info@koslosnutritionalsolutions.com

Jennifer is a full time professor with Kaplan University's School of Health Sciences, a Registered Dietitian (RD) and one of the few Certified Specialists in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) in the country. She received her Bachelor of Science in Biology from Juniata College, and earned a dual Master of Science in Human Nutrition and Exercise Science from Colorado State University. She received a Registered Dietitian certification from the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and Colorado State University, a Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics certification from the ADA, and is currently working on her doctorate degree in education with an emphasis in instructional design for online learning. In addition to teaching online, Jennifer is a sports nutrition consultant in the Phoenix area and working with local triathlete, cycling and running groups. Her consulting business can be found online at www.koslosnutritionalsolutions.com. Jennifer has been a runner for many years and continues to compete in marathons and triathlons and hopes to complete her first Ironman in 2012. (Photo

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