

A handful of blueberries a day could help improve brain function, lower blood pressure

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New research from King's Faculty of Life Sciences and Medicine has found that eating a handful of wild blueberries daily has health benefits, including lowered blood pressure, faster reaction time, and improved

memory and brain cognition.

The study, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, was led by researchers from King's and the University of Reading. It involved a randomized, double blind, placebo-controlled trial of 61 healthy men and women aged 65 to 80, who drank a beverage made with 26 grams of freeze-dried wild blueberry powder (equivalent to about 178 grams of whole berries) while the other group drank a matching placebo.

Over twelve weeks, researchers found that volunteers who consumed the berry powder in drinks experienced better memory and an improved accuracy on attention tasks, as well as lower [blood pressure](#). Also during this period, after consuming berries the blood pressure of the test group was lower when compared to the [placebo group](#), in addition to having an increased flow mediated dilation (FMD), which leads to a lower risk of [cardiovascular disease](#).

Dr. Ana Rodriguez-Mateos said, "This study is the first of its kind and the results suggest that a daily intake of wild blueberries could help lower people's risk of cardiovascular disease by lowering their blood pressure and improving blood vessel function. We know from previous research that there are potential advantages from consuming blueberries, but this study went further by exploring how a daily and dietary achievable measure of blueberries could benefit our cognitive and cardiovascular health simultaneously in a healthy older population.

"We think the blue pigments in blueberries, the anthocyanins, which are a type of polyphenols also present in other foods such as strawberries, raspberries, red grapes and purple vegetables, are behind these effects as increases in their metabolites were seen in the urine of the volunteers after 12 weeks consumption."

Professor Claire Williams, Chair of the Neuroscience Department for

University of Reading, said, "It's clear from this study that consuming wild blueberries is beneficial to cognitive function, as well as vascular health. The group who had the wild [blueberry](#) powder showed signs of better memory and greater mental flexibility when completing cognitive tasks. This is consistent with what we already know about the [health benefits](#) of anthocyanin-rich foods. It points to an important role of polyphenols in healthy aging."

The study was funded by the Wild Blueberry Association of North America.

More information: Eleanor Wood et al, Wild Blueberry (Poly)phenols can Improve Vascular Function And Cognitive Performance In Healthy Older Males And Females: A Double-Blind Randomized Controlled Trial, *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ajcnut.2023.03.017](#)

Provided by King's College London

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