

What can apple cider vinegar really do for your health?

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Apple cider vinegar has been used for everything from flavoring salad dressings to cleaning toilets, washing windows and unclogging drains.

Long a bit player in the utilitarian, back-of-the-pantry arsenal, apple cider vinegar's popularity has been rising in recent years. Thanks to social media influencers, this sour-tasting liquid is now touted for its supposed ability to promote weight loss and control diabetes, potentially improving cardiovascular health. TikTok abounds with apple cider vinegar drink recipes and products, while YouTube videos encourage people to mix it with warm water and sip it before bedtime.

But is there any evidence to back claims of its health-boosting benefits?

There's some, said Lindsey Wohlford, a registered dietitian at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. "Many small studies show moderate to little health benefits. But we don't have a ton of studies showing significant benefits."

Apple cider vinegar is an [acetic acid](#) that comes from fermenting apples. It's mostly water—nearly 94%—and also contains a tiny bit of iron, calcium, magnesium, zinc, sodium, sugar and some potassium.

As far back as 3300 B.C., apple cider vinegar was considered to have healing powers to disinfect wounds and treat infections or insect bites. More recently, it gained attention during the COVID-19 pandemic as a potential immunity booster. It's also sold in powder, tablet, capsule and gummy form.

Here are the major claims about what apple cider vinegar can do—and what the research says.

Claim: It lowers blood glucose

"That's the claim that is best supported," Wohlford said.

Several studies have found that consuming apple cider vinegar daily could slightly reduce fasting blood glucose and A1C—a test that measures average blood glucose levels over three months—in people with Type 2 diabetes.

A 2021 [meta-analysis published](#) in *BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies* found consuming apple cider vinegar reduced fasting [blood glucose](#) by about 8 milligrams per deciliter in people with Type 2 diabetes whose glucose levels were higher to begin with.

A [small study](#), published in *Frontiers in Clinical Diabetes and Healthcare* in 2023, showed A1C dropped from 9.21% to 7.79% in people who consumed 30 milliliters—about 2 tablespoons—of apple cider vinegar daily for eight weeks and were encouraged to follow a healthy diet.

Claim: It lowers cholesterol

Likewise, the 2021 meta-analysis also suggested a link between apple cider vinegar consumption and a reduction in total cholesterol, which was most pronounced in people with Type 2 diabetes and those who drank up to 15 mL/day for more than eight weeks. The 2023 study found people with Type 2 diabetes who consumed 30 mL/day for eight weeks and who were encouraged to follow a healthy diet lowered both "bad" LDL cholesterol and total cholesterol more than people who just received encouragement to follow a healthy diet.

"Overall, most of these studies are not done with very large populations," Wohlford said. "I wouldn't say we were sure of any of this."

Claim: It promotes weight loss

Some recent studies have suggested that daily consumption of apple

cider vinegar could help people with higher weights reduce their appetite and lose weight. But Wohlford cautioned that these were small, short-term studies that shouldn't be interpreted to mean apple cider vinegar will solve anybody's weight problems.

"Apple cider vinegar will not improve [weight loss](#) significantly and won't become a sustainable habit. Most people won't take it forever and ever," she said.

"I feel like so often, people are looking for a shortcut," Wohlford said. "When it comes to managing weight, what we really want are sustainable behaviors, things that contribute to the overall reduction of chronic disease risk. This is not going to take the place of a healthy diet and regular exercise."

Claim: It promotes gut health

Apple cider vinegar contains natural probiotics because it is a fermented product, Wohlford said. Probiotic-rich foods boost the amount of healthy bacteria found in our gastrointestinal tract and have been linked to immunity, brain health and more.

"It is something helpful to include in your diet when you look to keep your microbiome healthy and good bacteria thriving," she said.

Can it be harmful?

"Apple cider vinegar is very acidic," Wohlford said. "It can cause erosion to tooth enamel and damage the esophagus if you drink it straight."

Some people also experience an upset stomach or acid reflux, she said.

But consuming it as an ingredient in salad dressings or other foods is fine.

How to consume apple cider vinegar

While the health benefits apple cider vinegar provides may be minimal, there's no harm in adding small amounts of it to your diet, Wohlford said.

"If you want to drink it, you really need to dilute it with water or put some in your tea to minimize damage to the esophagus or tooth enamel," she said. "But it's not a great taste."

The best way to eat it is as part of a meal, Wohlford said. "Add it to salad dressings, sauces or marinades. Use it to pickle vegetables. That's a win-win. You get the vegetables and all of the great fiber and nutrients they provide, as well as the [apple cider vinegar](#)."

Provided by American Heart Association

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