

# Researchers say tart cherries have 'the highest anti-inflammatory content of any food'

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Tart cherries may help reduce chronic inflammation, especially for the millions of Americans suffering from debilitating joint pain and arthritis, according to new research from Oregon Health & Science University presented today at the American College of Sports Medicine Conference (ACSM) in San Francisco, Calif.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the researchers suggest tart cherries have the "highest anti-inflammatory content of any food" and can help people with osteoarthritis manage their disease.

In a study of twenty women ages 40 to 70 with inflammatory osteoarthritis, the researchers found that drinking tart cherry juice twice daily for three weeks led to significant reductions in important inflammation markers – especially for women who had the highest inflammation levels at the start of the study.

"With millions of Americans looking for ways to naturally manage pain, it's promising that tart cherries can help, without the possible side effects often associated with [arthritis](#) medications," said Kerry Kuehl, M.D, Dr.PH., M.S., Oregon Health & Science University, principal study investigator. "I'm intrigued by the potential for a real food to offer such a powerful anti-inflammatory benefit – especially for active adults."

Often characterized as "wear and tear" arthritis, osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis. Athletes are often at a greater risk for developing the condition, given their excessive joint use that can cause a

breakdown in cartilage and lead to pain and injury, according to the Arthritis Foundation.

The inflammation benefits could be particularly important for athletes, according to Kuehl's previous research. In a past study he found that people who drank tart cherry juice while training for a long distance run reported significantly less pain after exercise than those who didn't.<sup>2</sup>

## **Go Red Instead to Manage Pain**

Along with providing the fruit's bright red color, the antioxidant compounds in tart cherries – called anthocyanins – have been specifically linked to high antioxidant capacity and reduced inflammation, at levels comparable to some well-known pain medications.<sup>3</sup>

Previous research on tart cherries and osteoarthritis conducted by researchers at Baylor Research Institute found that a daily dose of tart cherries (as cherry extract) helped reduce osteoarthritis pain by more than 20 percent for the majority of men and women.<sup>4</sup> And the same compounds linked to cherries' arthritis benefits have now shown promise for athletes and sports recovery to help relieve muscle and joint soreness.

According to Director of Sports Nutrition at the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center for Sports Medicine, Leslie Bonci, MPH, RD, CSSD, LDN, who has incorporated tart cherries into the training menu of both her professional athletes and active clients as a natural and easy way to manage [pain](#) that also tastes great, "Why not eat red when there's so much science to support the anti-inflammatory benefits of this Super Fruit? And for athletes whose palates prefer the tart-sweet flavor profile of tart cherries, it's the optimal ingredient."

Available every day of the year in dried, frozen and juice forms, tart

cherries are a versatile ingredient to include in any training or inflammation-fighting diet.

**More information:** Sources:

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3. Seeram NP, Momin RA, Nair MG, Bourquin LD. Cyclooxygenase inhibitory and antioxidant cyanidin glycosides in cherries and berries. Phytomedicine 2001;8:362-369.
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