

ADD AN AVO EVERYDAY

Even though avocados are known for their fat content, they may actually help you maintain a healthy weight when eaten as part of a balanced diet. This is just one benefit of eating this nutrient rich food.

Avocados – the fruit from the *Persea americana tree* – are grown widely in Australia. While mainly used in savoury dishes in Australia, other countries around the world use avocados in sweet dishes such as milkshakes, ice creams and cakes.



Avocado for a healthy weight

Would it surprise you to learn that avocados are not “fattening” when substituted for other fats in the diet? A study found that you can replace 30g of other healthy fats such as margarine spreads and cooking oils with 200g of avocado in a weight loss diet and still lose weight.¹ Healthy fats play a role in controlling appetite by releasing hormones in the intestine that signal fullness.² So even if you are watching your waistline you can still eat avocados.

Avocado for antioxidants

Mother Nature protects the fats in avocados from going rancid too quickly by ensuring antioxidants are present. The gorgeous green and yellow colours of avocados come from natural antioxidant pigments called chlorophyll (green) and carotenoids – beta carotene (orange) and lutein and zeaxanthin (yellows). As these orange and yellow colours are fat soluble, they are present inside the very nutrient they are there to protect.³ These natural colours also play important roles in maintaining eye health.^{4,5}

Avocados are also a rich source of vitamin E – a fat soluble antioxidant vitamin. Vitamin E needs vitamin C to work efficiently⁶ so it's no surprise that avocados are also rich in vitamin C with 120g providing nearly a third of daily vitamin C needs. Avocados therefore have a strong antioxidant capacity similar to other fruits and vegetables.^{7,8}

Avocado for better absorption of carotenoids

The fats in avocados help your body absorb the carotenoids from other vegetables too. Research found adding avocado (75-150g) to salads helped the absorption of these colourful pigments from carrot, lettuce, spinach and other vegetables. The more avocado added, the more carotenoids were absorbed.⁹

Avocado for natural plant sterols

Plant sterols help reduce cholesterol re-absorption in the intestine, thereby increasing the amount of cholesterol excreted from the body. You can purchase margarine spreads, milks and other foods with added plant sterols. Avocados also contain small quantities of plant sterols – around 100mg in a half an avocado. The main kind of plant sterol in avocados is beta-sitosterol.¹⁰

KEY BENEFITS

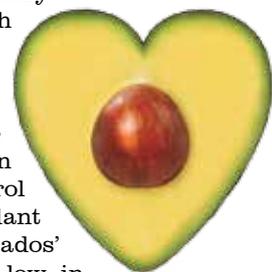
- Rich in healthy monounsaturated fats for a healthy heart and helps manage weight
- Contains antioxidants, including vitamins C and E and carotenoids
- High in fibre, especially soluble fibre for healthy bowel function
- Rich in folate for pregnant women
- Perfect first food for baby

Avocado for fibre

Like all plant foods avocados are a good source of fibre with around 5g per 120g serve or 17% of the Recommended Dietary Intake (RDI) for adults. Fibre is needed to maintain a healthy bowel function but can also help fill you up, controlling your appetite for longer. Of the fibre in avocados, about two thirds is soluble fibre.¹¹ Soluble fibre is a gel-like substance that can also lower cholesterol re-absorption from the intestine – similar to plant sterols.¹¹ The cholesterol gets trapped in the gel and is excreted.

Avocado for a healthy heart

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables such as avocado can reduce the risk of heart disease. Around two thirds of the total fat in avocado is monounsaturated fat. Diets rich in monounsaturated fats are necessary to maintain a healthy heart.¹² Research has found that if you have high blood cholesterol then eating avocados as part of a healthy diet can lower total and low-density lipoprotein (bad) cholesterol while increasing the high density lipoprotein (good) cholesterol.^{1,10} An elevated cholesterol level is a risk factor for heart disease.¹³ Plant sterols and soluble fibre also add to avocados' heart health properties.¹³ Avocados are low in sodium and contain potassium. Adequate intake of potassium can help to guard against high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.¹⁴



Avocado for Folate

Avocados are rich in folate a B group vitamin needed for cell division. Women of child bearing age need to consume at least 400ug folate per day at least the month before and three months after conception and then 600ug during pregnancy. A diet rich in folate including avocado may reduce the risk of foetal neural tube defects.¹⁵ Half an avocado contains 144ug, 36% of the adult RDI or 24% RDI for pregnant women. Avocados are also a perfect first food for babies to try – smooth, nutrient rich and conveniently packaged.



FACT FILE

Season

Avocados are available all year round but the peak season is March to September.

Buying, storing and preserving

The most popular varieties of avocado are the Hass which has a pebbly purple-black skin with creamy coloured flesh, and the pear shaped Shepard which has smooth, thin, green skin. There are many other green varieties of avocado which are also available in Australian stores. The yellow-green flesh has a rich smooth consistency and a nutty flavour. Choose ripe avocados which are soft but free from dark sunken spots. A firm avocado will ripen in a paper bag or in a fruit basket at room temperature with apples or bananas within a few days. Once ripe, they will keep in the fridge for a day or two. Slice around the stone and twist the two halves to separate, then use a spoon to remove the stone. Sprinkle any exposed cut surface with lemon or lime juices or white vinegar to prevent the flesh from browning, or alternatively press cling wrap firmly on the exposed edge.

5 ways to get more avocados in your day

Ever buy an avocado and use half on sandwiches and salads and then wonder what to do with the other half? Here's five ideas to tempt your taste buds:

- 1. For breaky** – Top your breakfast toast with slices of avocado and scrambled egg.
- 2. In wraps** – Add sliced avocado to your lunchtime salad burrito.
- 3. Instead of spreads** – Instead of using margarine in your potato mash use avocado and give your mash a green hue.
- 4. In a smoothie** – Ever thought of using avocado in a milk smoothie? Give it a go, its easy using green!
- 5. In cakes** – Use in cake recipes as a great dairy substitute for those with lactose intolerance.

How much should you eat?

Add variety to your diet by enjoying half an avocado (about 100-120g) each day in place of other healthy oils, such as margarine spread or salad dressings.

Nutrients in a typical avocado

Nutrient	Average quantities per 120g serve
Energy (kJ / kcal)	1034 / 246
Protein (g)	2.4
Fibre (g) ^	5.0 (17% RDI)
Soluble fibre (g)	2.4
Total fat (g)	25.7
Saturated fat (g)	5.8 (23% of total fat)
Monounsaturated fat (g)	15.4
Polyunsaturated fat (g)	3.2
Plant sterols (mg)*	100
Beta carotene (ug)	215
Lutein and zeaxanthin (mg)*	353
Folate (ug) ^	144 (36% RDI)
Vitamin C (mg)	13 (29% RDI)
Vitamin E (mg)*	2.3 (23% RDI)
Vitamin K (ug)*	25 (31%RDI)
Sodium (mg)	5
Potassium (mg)	611 (15% RDI)
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Source: NUTTAB 2010 (RDI based on adult male), *Source: USDA database Release 23 (2010), ^ NMI2010 lab results #Source: USDA ORAC paper 2010*.



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