

## Apple Awesomeness

By Sara Colman Carlson, RDN, CDCES

Apples are one of the most awesome fruits in my opinion. This popular fruit is easy to carry for a snack or lunch, requires no peeling or cutting, and lasts a while if you forget it in your backpack or purse. There's a multitude of apple varieties, some great for eating fresh, some great for cooking. From sweet to tart, each variety varies in taste, crunchiness and color.

### Varieties

Most popular apple varieties include Fuji, gala, golden or red delicious, and Granny Smith. Each year new varieties are developed. My favorite apple is the Envy Apple, a New Zealand hybrid that is sweet with a perfect crunch—perfect for eating raw with a bit of peanut butter.

Most likely you've heard the saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away". The original term originated from Wales in the 1860's as "Eat an apple on going to bed, and you'll keep the doctor from earning his bread." It was sometimes shortened to "An apple a day, no doctor to pay", and in 1920's coined as its existing phrase.



### Health Benefits

Studies on the health benefits of apples have tried to determine if, indeed, fewer doctor visits occur in apple eaters. Results from several studies show a reduction in bad cholesterol levels and less chance of stroke in those who eat apples more frequently.

Apples contain beneficial phytochemicals, including carotenoids, flavonoids. Anthroxanthins and Allicin, both found in white pigment produce, have been shown to decrease blood pressure, cholesterol, cancer and cardiovascular disease. The antioxidants in apples, and other produce, help boost the immune system and fight inflammation, which is linked to many chronic diseases. Apples may also reduce risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

Like other produce low in calories and high in fiber, apples can produce a feeling of fullness, and provide satisfaction for the sweet tooth. This can help with weight loss. Apples contain pectin, a fiber that feeds the good bacteria in your gut. Be sure to include the apple peel for the best benefit.

### Nutrients

Nutritionally, apples are low in calories, provide a healthy source of carbs and fiber, as well a vitamins C and K. One medium apple contains 95 calories, 0.5 g protein, 25 g carbs, 19 g natural sugar, 4.3 g fiber, 0 g fat, 2 mg sodium and 195 mg potassium.

### Enjoying Apples

In addition to eating fresh apples, consider all these ways apples are prepared: applesauce, apple butter, baked apples, caramel or candied apples, canned slices, dehydrated, freeze dried, pickled and stewed. Apple pie, crumble and cobbler are favorite desserts, as well as stuffed microwaved or baked apples. The healthiest choice is to eat a fresh apple—preferable every day!

