

A Health Professionals Perspective

Dr Steve

Why Don't G.P's Tell their Patients to Eat Avocados?

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Doctors “know” Avocados are :

- A “Luxury” food item – not part of every day diet
- Expensive
- Calorie dense, thus “fattening” in excess amount
- High in Mono-unsaturated fats



What are the Most Serious Diseases that Face a GP daily?

- High Cholesterol and Heart Disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Cancer – skin/prostate/breast/bowel.

Where does a GP find Good information re Avocados for Preventing and Treating Disease?

- Avocado Industry Web sites :
 - www.avocado.org.au (refces unavail)
 - www.nzavocado.co.nz (useful composition data)
 - www.olivado.com . Only 1 review article, 4 refces (2002)
- Google “avocado” = adverts for pills
- Pub Med - “avocado + cholesterol” = 16 papers
- NZ/Aust Diabetes & Heart.org – cautiously restrictive

Doctors actually don't know that

Avocados :

- Lower Cholesterol
- Low glycaemic
- High fibre
- 1/3 calories & 1/3 fat content of butter or margarine. (60 - 70% as MUFA)
- Very high in Vitamin E
- Very high in phytosterols

Pub-Med - Avocado + Cholesterol

Scientific Papers

4 papers (2 incl. diabetic patients) tested the effect of added dietary avocado on cholesterol, and diabetes control

- Avocado significantly lowered LDL Cholesterol & Triglycerides while preserving levels of good HDL cholesterol - compared to either iso-caloric High Complex Carb (HCC) or Low Saturated Fat (LSF) diets
- Added avocado had no adverse effect on diabetes control
- Added avocado diet better compliance than HCC or LSF.
- Added avocado never lowered the good HDL as did the LSF and HCC diets in some of the studies.

Monounsaturated Fatty Acid (avocado) rich diet for mild hypercholesterolaemia .

Effect of adding Avocado for 7 days, (Iso-cal 2000 kcals)
Avocado Diet (AD) MFA 49 g. Control Diet (CD) MFA 34 g

- In both normal and high cholesterol persons the LDL and Trigs dropped (13 – 22%) and the good HDL rose with AD, but not with the CD ($p < .001\%$ & $< .01\%$)
- Other studies, 2 – 4 week diets show figures of healthy good 10 – 15% drops in LDL cholesterol, Triglycerides, Total/HDL Cholesterol Ratio
(Lopes, Frati, Hernandes et al Arch.Med. Res. 1992 Winter 23(4) 163-7.)

So will Avocados help the Serious Diseases that Face a GP daily?

High cholesterol - lowers LDL chol. and Trigs and preserves/raises good HDL

Diabetes - low glycaemic plus helps cholesterol without upsetting diabetes control

Obesity – low glycaemic high fibre and lower calories than butter/margarine.

Cancer – very high in Vitamin E and physterols.

Your Challenge?

- To change GPs from “passive” to “active” promoters for their patients regularly eating avocados, by -
- Dispelling the luxury, expensive, calorie dense” myth, and –
- Making easily available to the GP, information and knowledge of the Avocado’s role as a “food medicine” to be safely and actively added to patients who may have obesity, or high cholesterol or diabetes

Your maths?

- If 10% of population have high cholesterol or diabetes and eat just 1 avocado a week to help “treat” these illnesses, then for
- 22 million Aussies and 4 million Kiwis,
- How many trays do not have to be exported each year ?

Growers Beware!

Most studies of isolated food compounds fail to show any benefits when given in tablet form, and some show harm

Vitamin A Retinol - 16% increased risk of death

Vitamin A B-Carotene - 7 % increased risk of death

Vitamin E - 4% increased risk of death

(Antioxidant Supplements for prevention of Mortality in Healthy Participants and Patients with various Diseases. Bjelakovic et al. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2008 Issue 2. 16th April 2008)