

Figs: Nutrition, Benefits, and Downsides

Figs are a unique fruit resembling a teardrop. They're about the size of your thumb, filled with hundreds of tiny seeds, and have an edible purple or green peel. The flesh of the fruit is pink and has a mild, sweet taste. The scientific name for the fig is *Ficus carica*.

Figs — and their leaves — are packed with nutrients and offer a variety of potential health benefits. They may promote healthy digestion, decrease your risk of heart disease, and help you manage your blood sugar levels.

This article reviews figs, including their nutrition, benefits, and downsides, as well as how to add them to your diet.

Fresh figs are rich in nutrients while being relatively low in calories, making them a great addition to a healthy diet.

One small (40-gram) fresh fig contains ([1Trusted Source](#)):

- **Calories:** 30
- **Protein:** 0 grams
- **Fat:** 0 grams
- **Carbs:** 8 grams
- **Fiber:** 1 gram
- **Copper:** 3% of the Daily Value (DV)
- **Magnesium:** 2% of the DV
- **Potassium:** 2% of the DV
- **Riboflavin:** 2% of the DV
- **Thiamine:** 2% of the DV
- **Vitamin B6:** 3% of the DV
- **Vitamin K:** 2% of the DV

Fresh figs contain some calories from natural sugar, but having a few figs is a reasonable, [low calorie snack](#) or addition to a meal.

On the other hand, dried figs are high in sugar and rich in calories, as the sugar becomes concentrated when the fruits are dried.

Figs also contain small amounts of a wide variety of nutrients, but they're particularly rich in copper and vitamin B6.

Copper is a vital mineral that's involved in several bodily processes, including metabolism and energy production, as well as the formation of blood cells, connective tissues, and neurotransmitters ([2Trusted Source](#)).

Vitamin B6 is a key vitamin necessary to help your body break down dietary protein and create new proteins. It also plays an important role in brain health ([3Trusted Source](#)).

Summary

Fresh figs are low in calories and contain a variety of vitamins and minerals. However, dried figs are high in sugar and calories.

Figs have many potential benefits, including promoting digestive and heart health, along with potentially helping manage blood sugar levels.

Promote digestive health

Figs have long been used as a home remedy or an alternative treatment for digestive problems like constipation ([4Trusted Source](#)).

They contain fiber, which may help promote digestive health by softening and adding bulk to stools, decreasing constipation, and serving as a prebiotic — or food source for the healthy bacteria populating your gut ([5Trusted Source](#), [6Trusted Source](#)).

In animal studies, fig fruit extract or paste helped speed the movement of food through the digestive tract, [reducing constipation](#) and improving the symptoms of digestive disorders like ulcerative colitis ([7Trusted Source](#), [8Trusted Source](#)).

A study in 150 people with irritable bowel syndrome with constipation (IBS-C) found that those who consumed about 4 dried figs (45 grams) twice daily experienced a significant reduction in symptoms — including pain, bloating, and constipation — compared with a control group ([9Trusted Source](#)).

What's more, a similar study in 80 people found that supplementing with about 10 ounces (300 grams) of fig fruit paste daily for 8 weeks significantly decreased constipation, compared with a control group ([10Trusted Source](#)).

May improve vascular and heart health

Figs may improve blood pressure and blood fat levels, which can help improve your vascular health and decrease your risk of heart disease.

One study found that fig extract decreased blood pressure in rats with normal blood pressure, as well as those with elevated levels ([11Trusted Source](#)).

Animal studies have also shown improvements in total cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, and [triglyceride levels](#) when supplementing with fig leaf extract ([12Trusted Source](#), [13Trusted Source](#)).

However, in a 5-week study in 83 people with high LDL (bad) cholesterol, researchers noted that those who added about 14 dried figs (120 grams) to their diet daily had no changes in blood fat levels, compared with a control group ([14Trusted Source](#)).

More human studies are needed to better understand the relationship between figs and heart health.

May help manage blood sugar levels

One dated study from 1998 in 10 people with type 1 diabetes found that having fig leaf tea with breakfast may have decreased their insulin needs. In the month they received fig leaf tea, their

insulin doses decreased by about 12% ([15Trusted Source](#)).

What's more, a more recent study found that drinks containing high doses of fig fruit extract had a lower glycemic index (GI) than beverages with no fig fruit extract, meaning these drinks would have a more favorable effect on [blood sugar levels](#) ([16Trusted Source](#)).

However, fig fruits — especially dried figs — are high in sugar and may increase blood sugar levels in the short term. If you have trouble managing your blood sugar levels, you should limit your intake of dried figs.

Potential anticancer properties

Many promising test-tube studies have been conducted on the effects of fig leaves on cancer cells.

Fig leaves and natural latex from fig plants have been shown to exhibit antitumor activity against human colon cancer, breast cancer, cervical cancer, and liver cancer cells ([17Trusted Source](#), [18Trusted Source](#), [19Trusted Source](#), [20Trusted Source](#)).

However, this doesn't mean that eating figs or drinking fig leaf tea will exert the same effects. Test-tube studies offer a promising starting point, but human studies are needed to assess how ingesting figs or fig leaves [affects cancer growth](#).

May promote healthy skin

Figs may have some beneficial effects on the skin, especially in people with allergic dermatitis — or dry, itchy skin as a result of allergies.

One study in 45 children with [dermatitis](#) found that a cream made from dried fig fruit extract applied twice daily for 2 weeks was more effective at treating the symptoms of dermatitis than hydrocortisone cream, the standard treatment ([21Trusted Source](#)).

What's more, a combination of fruit extracts — including fig extract — was shown to exhibit antioxidant effects on skin cells, decrease collagen breakdown, and improve the appearance of wrinkles in a test-tube and animal study ([22Trusted Source](#)).

However, it's difficult to determine if these positive effects came from the fig extract or one of the other extracts being studied. More research is needed to determine figs' effects on skin health.

Summary

Figs have a variety of potential health benefits. They may improve digestion and decrease constipation, help manage blood fat and blood sugar levels, and kill cancer cells. However, more research in humans is needed.

Figs have some potential downsides. For instance, as they're sometimes used as a [home remedy for constipation](#), figs may cause diarrhea or other digestive problems ([10Trusted Source](#)).

Figs are also fairly [rich in vitamin K](#), which can interfere with blood thinning medications and cause them to be less effective ([1Trusted Source](#), [23Trusted Source](#)).

If you're on a blood thinner, you should keep your intake of figs and other vitamin-K-rich foods

consistent from day to day to decrease your risk of complications ([23Trusted Source](#)).

Finally, some people may be allergic to figs. If you have an allergy to birch pollen, you may be more likely to have a fig allergy as well. Fig trees also contain natural latex, which some people may be allergic to ([24Trusted Source](#)).

Summary

Figs may cause digestive upset or diarrhea due to their anti-constipation effects. They may also interfere with blood thinners, and some people may be allergic to them.

There are a number of ways to add figs to your diet, each with its own potential benefits. Here are the four main ways you can include figs in your diet:

- **Fresh.** Fresh figs are low in calories and make for a great snack, and they're an excellent addition to salads or desserts. You can also make fig jam or preserves with fresh figs.
- **Dried.** [Dried figs](#) are high in sugar and calories, so they should be eaten in moderation. They may be more effective at treating constipation than fresh figs ([9Trusted Source](#), [10Trusted Source](#)).
- **Fig leaves.** Although they may be difficult to find outside of specialty grocers, fig leaves are nutritious and can be used in a variety of ways. They're often used the same way grape leaves are, as a wrap for dishes containing rice, meat, or other fillings.
- **Fig leaf tea.** Fig leaf tea is made from dried fig leaves. You can make it yourself or purchase premade fig leaf teas online or in specialty stores.

You can enjoy figs in a variety of ways, but due to their high sugar content, you should only eat dried figs in moderation or use them as an occasional home treatment for constipation.

Summary

To reap the benefits of figs, you can buy fresh figs, dried figs, fig leaves, or fig leaf tea to add to your diet. Be sure to only use dried figs in moderation due to their sugar content.

Figs have a variety of potential health benefits. Along with the fruit, fig leaves and fig leaf tea appear to be beneficial for health. Dried figs in particular may help relieve constipation.

However, figs may interfere with [blood thinning medications](#) due to their vitamin K content, and dried figs should be eaten in moderation due to their high sugar content.

That said, overall, fresh figs, fig leaves, and fig leaf tea make great additions to a healthy diet.