

Lifestyle Fact Sheet: Balanced Life

There is a simple rule of thumb: good nutrition can help you avoid many diseases, but good nutrition can't always cure a disease. Good wholesome eating not only makes you feel better and perform better, it also delays aging until as late as possible. With average lifespan of women being 84 years and for men 79 years, those that look after themselves are likely to be "above average" and live well into their 80s.

Nutrition insurance

Eating well becomes an insurance against getting sick in the future. The government encourages us to eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables each day. Fruit and vegetables provide essential vitamins and minerals. For example, the banana provides vitamin C, folate, riboflavin and is the best fruit source of vitamin B6 (a medium banana provides over a quarter of your daily B6 needs). The banana is famous for its potassium content, a mineral that helps keep our blood pressure normal.

Banana bonus

The benefits of the banana go way beyond the vitamins and minerals. The banana offers fibre to keep your intestines healthy. The average banana provides around 3g of fibre, which is 10-15% of the fibre recommended for good bowel health. Bananas are the only common fruit to have starch. Most of this starch (called resistant starch) passes into the large bowel to act like fibre. Australia's premier science body, CSIRO, says that diets high in resistant starch have been associated with improved bowel health and a reduction in the risk of colorectal cancer.

The banana also contains lectins, which have been strongly linked to a reduction in the risk of cancer. These lectins are known to resist digestion and enter the blood stream intact. They can affect the growth and proliferation of cancer cells, including causing the ultimate death of cancer cells.

Research on 61 000 Swedish women aged 40-76 years found that, of all the fruits, bananas gave the greatest protection against renal cancer. Women eating five bananas a week nearly halved their risk of renal cancer. It is far too early to be certain what in the banana is protecting us from future disease. It could be the lectins or other compounds found in the banana. Researchers have noted that bananas have an antioxidant effect that helps protect the arteries and nerve cells.

Bananas are great for the waistline

As the banana has no fat and is very filling, they are very good at helping you to control your eating. Bananas have a high satiety index, that is, they are very filling for the small amount of kilojoules they provide. If you are trying to maintain a healthy weight then eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and go easy on the fatty foods. Fruits, like the banana will fill you up without filling you out.

Banana benefits

You can see that the banana is providing benefits on a number of health fronts. Keep both ripe and unripe bananas in the fruit bowl so that as you enjoy the ripe banana, others are ripening for the next few days. As it is Australia's #1 fruit, the banana must be helping many Australians stay well.

