

Lena's Energy Boosters

People are drinking vinegar. Should you? Hmm ...

Unless you've been living under a rock, chances are you've heard about the much-touted health benefits of vinegar – in particular, apple cider vinegar. The ancient condiment – the earliest known use of vinegar dates back more than 10,000 years and has been used as both food and medicine – is enjoying a real resurgence lately. Cleansing diets and juicing have become so popular that it's created the recent buzz around vinegar.

As with any trend, it's easy to get lost in the hype and start believing that vinegar is a miracle medicine (it isn't). In fact, one of the most popular claims – that drinking a small amount of apple cider vinegar before a meal helps curb appetite and burn fat – has little scientific support, according to the Mayo Clinic.

A valid, science backed up benefit to vinegar, worth sharing is: Research shows that vinegars contain antioxidants, which slow premature aging and reduce the risk of cancer.

Here are a few ways vinegar can give your health a boost:

- It protects your heart health. Balsamic vinegar prevents the oxidation of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), which is believed to contribute to atherosclerosis – a condition in which plaque builds up in the arteries, blocking blood flow and in some cases, eventually leading to a heart attack or stroke, according to a 2010 study.
- Substituting vinegar can help you lose weight. The condiment can easily replace unhealthy fats – namely, in commercial salad dressing. “Take your favorite dressing (even creamy blue cheese). Split it into two bottles. Fill the remaining half with vinegar. The vinegar adds a delicious flavor and cuts calories in half.
- It kills bacteria. Vinegar is thought to have antibacterial properties that can help fight the infection behind a sore throat. The acidity decreases the pH of tissue, which helps prevent bacteria from growing on its surface.

Bottom line: Vinegar can be beneficial in several ways, but it isn't a magical cure-all and doesn't replace common sense behaviors like eating a healthy, balanced diet. Plus, vinegar is an acid, so going overboard with it or not rinsing out your mouth after consuming it can erode tooth enamel over time.

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