

gorgeous goji

This antioxidant-rich superfood may reduce wrinkles, prevent macular degeneration, and more

By Kim Erickson



It's red and wrinkled—and it's showing up in all sorts of skin care products. Goji berries are the new "wonder ingredient" for snacking—and skin care. Yet, while goji might be a novelty, these berries have been around for centuries under the name Chinese wolf-berried. No matter what you call them, goji berries have become a health food phenomenon that's spilling over to the beauty counter.

DID YOU KNOW?

For a double dose of antioxidants—and flavor—dark-chocolate-covered goji berries make a great snack. Find them at your favorite natural foods store.

What They Are

Goji berries have played an important role in traditional Chinese medicine for at least 2,000 years, gaining a reputation as an antiaging tonic and a valuable treatment for everything from poor vision to erectile dysfunction to cancer. If these exotic berries sound too good to be true, consider this: goji berries are incredibly nutrient dense with high levels of 2-O-(beta-D-glucopyranosyl) ascorbic acid, a precursor to vitamin C. The berries also contain significant amounts of beta-carotene, lutein, zeaxanthin, polysaccharides, beta-sitosterol, hesperidin, nicotinic acid, and vitamins B1, B2, and E.

These little nutritional powerhouses are also home to more than 30 essential and trace minerals, such as zinc, iron, copper, calcium, and selenium, as well as 18 amino acids, including tryptophan, leucine, and arginine. With such an amazing array of nutrients, it's no surprise that goji berries have a high score on the ORAC (oxygen radical absorbance capacity) scale. The ORAC score is known for measuring the antioxidants present in food. No wonder goji berries are being touted as

a way to promote good health, inside and out.

What They Do

Because many of the nutrients in goji berries have a proven benefit to the skin, it was just a matter of time until this Asian beauty started to show up in cosmetics. The antioxidants in goji berries can help to reduce inflammation and the sun damage that eventually cause wrinkles, age spots, and sagging. Plus, these free radical fighters protect dermal fibroblasts (the cells that make connective tissue).

While the antioxidants in goji—especially vitamins A, C, and E—prevent premature skin aging, another important compound in the berries can help you achieve complexion perfection. Nicotinic acid, or niacin, is used to treat acne-prone skin. Plus, this B vitamin helps seal in moisture, smooth out wrinkles, and reduce sun damage.

Bonus Benefits

Along with goji's potent antioxidant properties, recent studies show that the

berries have high zeaxanthin content. Zeaxanthin is an important carotenoid used by the retina. In one recent trial, those who took 15,000 mg of supplemental goji berry experienced more than twice the blood levels of zeaxanthin than those who didn't take the supplement, leading the researchers to speculate that a daily dose of goji just might help ward off age-related macular degeneration.

Goji berries guard against the formation of and protect nerve cells from beta-amyloid plaque, a protein involved in Alzheimer's disease. While it is too early to tell if goji berries will prove effective in the treatment of Alzheimer's, swapping your morning glass of OJ for goji juice may make you happier and more energetic. During a recent clinical trial, 35 people drank either 4 ounces of goji juice or a placebo drink for 14 days. At the end of the study, the participants who drank the goji juice reported that they slept better, felt calmer and more content, and had greater mental acuity. Half of the goji group also said they had more energy, better athletic performance, and improved gastrointestinal health. ♦

Product Examples *(from left to right):*

Trying to choose among the expanding number of goji products in your local health food store can leave your head spinning. To simplify your search, we've identified some of the very best: Pangea Organics JAPANESE MATCHA TEA WITH AÇAÍ & GOJI BERRY FACIAL MASK, Pure Fruit Technologies GOJI-ZEN juice, Home Health GOJI BERRY HAND & BODY LOTION, and Genesis Today GOJI100 juice.



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