

NUTRITION

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Watermelon 101: Nutrition Facts and Health Benefits



Written by [Adda Bjarnadottir, MS, RDN \(Ic\)](#) on March 7, 2019

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The watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) is a large, sweet fruit originally from southern Africa. It's related to cantaloupe, zucchini, pumpkin, and cucumber.

Watermelon is packed with water and nutrients, contains very few calories, and is exceptionally refreshing.

What's more, it's a good dietary source of both citrulline and lycopene, two powerful plant compounds.

This juicy melon may have several health benefits, including lower blood pressure, improved insulin sensitivity, and reduced muscle soreness.

While watermelons are predom
frozen, made into juice, or add

This article tells you everything



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Nutrition Facts

Watermelon consists mostly of water (91%) and carbs (7.5%). It provides almost no [protein](#) or fat and is very low in calories.

The nutrients in 2/3 cup (100 grams) of raw watermelon are (1[✓]):

- **Calories:** 30
- **Water:** 91%
- **Protein:** 0.6 grams
- **Carbs:** 7.6 grams
- **Sugar:** 6.2 grams
- **Fiber:** 0.4 grams
- **Fat:** 0.2 grams



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Watermelon contains 12 grams of [carbs](#) per cup (152 grams).

The carbs are mostly simple sugars, such as glucose, fructose, and sucrose. Watermelon also provides a small amount of fiber.

The glycemic index (GI) — a measure of how quickly foods raise blood sugar levels after meals — of watermelons ranges from 72–80, which is high (2).

However, each serving of watermelon is relatively low in carbs, so eating it should not have a major effect on blood sugar levels.

Fibers

Watermelon is a poor source of [fiber](#), providing only 0.4 grams per 2/3 cup (100 grams).

However, due to its fructose content, it is considered high in [FODMAPs](#), or fermentable short-chain carbohydrates (3 ✓).

Eating high amounts of fructose can cause unpleasant digestive symptoms in individuals who cannot fully digest them, such as those with fructose malabsorption (4 ✓).

SUMMARY

Watermelon is low in calories and fiber and consists mostly of water and simple sugars. It is high in [FODMAPs](#), which can cause digestive problems in some people.

How to Cut: Watermelon



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Vitamins and Minerals

Watermelon is a good source of vitamin C and a decent source of several other vitamins and minerals.

- **Vitamin C.** This antioxidant is essential for [skin health](#) and immune function (5 ✓, 6 ✓).
- **Potassium.** This mineral is important for blood pressure control and heart health (7 ✓).
- **Copper.** This mineral is most abundant in plant foods and often lacking in the Western diet (8 ✓).
- **Vitamin B5.** Also known as pantothenic acid, this vitamin is found in almost all foods to some extent.
- **Vitamin A.** Watermelon contains beta carotene, which your body can turn into [vitamin A](#).

SUMMARY

Watermelon is a good source of several vitamins and minerals (including large amounts of potassium, copper, and beta carotene).



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Other Plant Compounds

Watermelon is a poor source of (9).

However, it's rich in the amino lycopene, which have numerou

Citrulline



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flesh (9[✓], 11[✓], 12).

In your body, citrulline is transformed into the **essential amino acid** arginine.

Both citrulline and arginine play an important role in the synthesis of nitric oxide, which helps lower blood pressure by dilating and relaxing your blood vessels (13[✓]).

Arginine is also important for many organs — such as your lungs, kidneys, liver, and immune and reproductive systems — and has been shown to facilitate wound healing (14[✓], 15[✓], 16[✓]).

Studies note that watermelon juice is a good source of citrulline and can increase blood levels of both citrulline and arginine considerably (15[✓], 17[✓], 18).

Though watermelon is one of the best dietary sources of citrulline, you would have to consume about 15 cups (2.3 kg) at once to meet the Reference Daily Intake (RDI) for arginine (19[✓]).

Lycopene

Watermelon is the best known fresh source of **lycopene**, a powerful antioxidant responsible for its red color (20[✓], 21[✓], 22[✓], 23).

In fact, fresh watermelon is a better source of lycopene than **tomatoes** (1[✓]).

Human studies show that fresh watermelon can increase blood levels of both lycopene and arginine.

Your body uses lycopene to scavenge free radicals, which are then converted into vitamin A.



SUMMARY
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Watermelon is a good source of the amino acid citrulline and the antioxidant lycopene, which play important roles in your body.

Health Benefits of Watermelons

Watermelons and their juice are linked to several [health benefits](#).

Lower Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for chronic disease and premature death (25 [✓]).

Watermelon is a good source of citrulline, which is converted into arginine in your body. Both of these amino acids aid nitric oxide production.

Nitric oxide is a gas molecule that causes the tiny muscles around your blood vessels to relax and dilate. This leads to a reduction in blood pressure (26 [✓]).

Supplementing with watermelon or its juice may reduce blood pressure and arterial stiffness in people with high blood pressure (27 [✓], 28 [✓], 29 [✓], 30 [✓]).

Reduced Insulin Resistance

Insulin is a vital hormone in your body and involved in blood sugar control.

[Insulin resistance](#) is the condition that causes the effects of insulin. This can be linked to metabolic syndrome and

Watermelon juice and arginine may reduce insulin resistance in some studies (31 [✓]).



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Muscle soreness is a well-known side effect of strenuous [exercise](#).

One study showed that watermelon juice is effective at decreasing muscle soreness following exercise (34[✓]).

Research on watermelon juice (or citrulline) and exercise performance gives mixed results. One study found no effect, while another observed improved performance in untrained — but not well-trained — individuals (35[✓], 36[✓]).

SUMMARY

Watermelon may reduce blood pressure and insulin resistance in some people. It is also linked to reduced muscle soreness after exercise.

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Adverse Effects

Watermelon is well tolerated by

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However, it may cause allergic reactions or digestive problems in some individuals.

Allergy

Allergy to watermelon is rare and usually associated with oral-allergy syndrome in individuals who are sensitive to pollen (37[✓], 38[✓]).

Symptoms include itchy mouth and throat, as well as swelling of the lips, mouth, tongue, throat, and/or ears (39).

FODMAPs

Watermelon contains relatively high amounts of fructose, a type of FODMAP that some people do not fully digest.

FODMAPs like fructose may cause unpleasant digestive symptoms, such as [bloating](#), gas, stomach cramps, diarrhea, and constipation.

Individuals who are sensitive to FODMAPs, such as those with [irritable bowel syndrome](#) (IBS), should consider avoiding watermelons.

SUMMARY

Allergy to watermelons is rare but does exist. This fruit also contains FODMAPs, which may cause unpleasant digestive symptoms.

The Bottom Line

Watermelon is an exceptionally

It's loaded with citrulline and ly



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What’s more, it’s sweet, delicious, and packed with [water](#), making it excellent for maintaining good hydration.

For the vast majority of people, watermelon is a perfect addition to a [healthy diet](#).

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The Top 9 Health Benefits of Watermelon



Written by Kerri-Ann Jennings, MS, RD and [Fatima Hallal, APD](#) — Medically reviewed by [Amy Richter, RD, Nutrition](#) — Updated on November 8, 2021

Welcome to Fresh Food Fast, your source for creative, accessible recipes and nutrition tips to make eating healthier just a little bit easier — and more fun!

Watermelon is believed to have first been domesticated over 4,000 years ago in Northeast Africa (1[✓]).

It's sweet and juicy, making it the perfect fruit to munch on during the summer heat.

This large round fruit has a green rind and is packed with nutrients, including

Here are 9 of the top health benefits of watermelon:



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1. Helps you stay hydrated

Staying hydrated is important for your body to function properly.

Body temperature regulation, normal organ function, nutrient delivery to cells, and alertness are only some of the bodily processes that rely on adequate hydration (2[✓]).

Eating foods with a high water content helps your body stay hydrated. It needs to function properly.

Watermelon comprises 92% water, which is a significant portion of your daily water intake (3[✓]).

Furthermore, due to its high water content, watermelon is a great source of hydration.



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Eating foods with low calorie densities, such as watermelon, may aid weight management by keeping you feeling full for longer (4 ✓).

SUMMARY

Watermelon's high water content may help keep you hydrated — which supports your overall health — as well as feeling full.

2. Packed with nutrients and beneficial plant compounds

Watermelon contains a variety of nutrients, including potassium, magnesium, and vitamins A and C. It's also relatively low in calories, containing just 46 per cup (152 grams) (5 ✓).

Here are the nutrients in 1 cup (152 grams) of raw, diced watermelon:

- **Calories:** 46
- **Carbs:** 11.5 grams
- **Fiber:** 0.6 grams
- **Sugar:** 9.4 grams
- **Protein:** 0.9 grams
- **Fat:** 0.2 grams
- **Vitamin A:** 5% of the Daily Value
- **Vitamin C:** 14% of the Daily Value
- **Potassium:** 4% of the Daily Value
- **Magnesium:** 4% of the Daily Value

Watermelon is also a rich source of antioxidants that may help improve exercise performance.



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Plus, it boasts [antioxidants](#), including vitamin C, carotenoids, lycopene, and cucurbitacin E (3[✓], 7[✓]).

These compounds help combat free radicals, which are unstable molecules that may damage your cells if they accumulate in your body. Over time, this damage may lead to conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer (8[✓]).

SUMMARY

Watermelon boasts numerous nutrients, including a substantial amount of vitamins A and C. It also offers antioxidants like lycopene and cucurbitacin E.

3. May have anticancer effects

Several plant compounds found in watermelon, including lycopene and cucurbitacin E, have possible anticancer effects.

While study results are mixed, [lycopene intake](#) may be associated with a lower risk of some types of cancer, such as prostate and colorectal cancers (9[✓], 10[✓], 11[✓], 12[✓]).

Lycopene is believed to work by lowering blood levels of insulin-like growth factor (IGF), a hormone that promotes cell division. Notably, cancer forms when cell division becomes uncontrolled.

Additionally, cucurbitacin E may promote the autophagy of [cancer cells](#). Autophagy removes damaged cells (14[✓], 15[✓]).

All the same, further human research is needed.



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Watermelon contains plant compounds that may combat certain forms of cancer. However, more studies are needed.

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4. May improve heart health

Several nutrients in watermelon may [support heart health](#).

Heart disease is the leading cause of death worldwide. It's worth noting that lifestyle factors like diet may lower your risk of heart attack and stroke by reducing your blood pressure and cholesterol levels (16[✓], 17[✓]).

Studies suggest that lycopene may help lower cholesterol and blood pressure. It may also help prevent oxidative damage caused by high cholesterol levels (3[✓]).

Watermelon also contains citrus flavonoids that may increase nitric oxide levels in your body. Nitric oxide is a molecule that relaxes blood vessels, which lowers blood pressure (1[✓]).

Other heart-healthy vitamins and minerals found in watermelon include [magnesium](#), potassium, and vitamin C.



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The lycopene and citrulline in watermelon may support heart health by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol.

5. May reduce inflammation and oxidative stress

Inflammation is a key driver of many chronic diseases.

The combination of antioxidants, lycopene, and vitamin C in watermelon may help [lower inflammation](#) and oxidative damage (3[✓]).

In one study, rats fed watermelon powder to supplement an unhealthy diet developed less oxidative stress and lower levels of the inflammatory marker C-reactive protein than those in the control group (19[✓]).

Additionally, an 8-week study gave 31 people with obesity and high inflammatory markers 500 mg of [vitamin C](#) twice daily. They showed a significant decrease in inflammatory markers compared with the control group (20[✓]).

As an antioxidant, lycopene may also delay the onset and progression of Alzheimer's disease. However, more research is needed (21).

SUMMARY

Watermelon contains compounds that may help reduce inflammation, high levels of cholesterol, and other chronic illnesses.

6. May help prevent heart disease

The watermelon compound lycopene may help



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Lycopene's role as an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compound may help prevent and inhibit AMD, though research is limited (22 ✓, 23 ✓).

One test-tube study that treated eye cells with lycopene found that it decreased the capacity of inflammatory markers to damage cells (22 ✓).

Keep in mind that human research is necessary.

SUMMARY

Lycopene may help prevent AMD due to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Still, further studies are needed.

7. May relieve muscle soreness

Citrulline, an amino acid found in watermelon, may improve exercise performance and reduce muscle soreness (24 ✓, 25 ✓).

It's also available as a [supplement](#).

One review found that regular intake of citrulline for at least 7 days improved aerobic performance by increasing the body's production of nitric oxide (26 ✓).

This compound helps expand blood vessels so that your heart doesn't need to work as hard to pump blood through your body (27).

What's more, some evidence suggests that citrulline — may [aid your body](#)

One older study gave athletes a supplement mixed with citrulline, or a control, and found that citrulline reduced muscle soreness and quicker recovery (28 ✓).



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SUMMARY

The citrulline in watermelon may help improve exercise performance and decrease muscle soreness.

8. May aid skin health

Vitamins A and C, which are found in watermelon, are important for [skin health](#).

Vitamin C — either when eaten or applied topically — helps your body make collagen, a protein that keeps your skin supple and your hair strong ([29](#) ✓, [30](#) ✓).

One review found that a higher intake of vitamin C from food and/or supplements may decrease your chances of developing wrinkles and dry skin ([31](#) ✓, [32](#) ✓).

Vitamin A is also important for healthy skin since it helps create and repair skin cells ([33](#) ✓).

In one review, animals with vitamin A deficiency had poorer wound healing than those fed a nutritionally complete diet ([34](#) ✓).

Bear in mind that further human studies on watermelon specifically are needed.

SUMMARY

Several nutrients in watermelon may help improve skin health, though more research is needed.



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Watermelon contains plenty of water and a small amount of [fiber](#), both of which are necessary for healthy digestion.

Fiber helps keep your bowels regular, while water moves waste through your digestive tract more efficiently ([35](#) , [36](#) ).

One survey in 4,561 adults found that those with low fluid and low fiber intakes were more likely to [experience constipation](#). Nonetheless, other factors may have played a role ([37](#) ).

SUMMARY

The fiber and water content in watermelon may aid your digestive health by supporting regular bowel movements.

The bottom line

Watermelon is a tasty, thirst-quenching [fruit](#) that many people enjoy in the heat of summer.

It has a very high water content and provides nutrients like lycopene, citrulline, and vitamins A and C.

Studies suggest that this sweet, red melon may even boost heart health, reduce muscle soreness, and decrease inflammation, though more research is needed.



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