

BANANAS

If you want a quick fix for flagging energy levels there's no better snack than a banana. Containing three natural sugars - sucrose, fructose and glucose - combined with fibre; a banana gives an instant, sustained and substantial boost of energy.

Research has proved that just two bananas provide enough energy for a strenuous 90-minute workout. No wonder the banana is the number one fruit with the world's leading athletes. But energy isn't the only way banana can help us keep fit. It can also help overcome or prevent a substantial number of illnesses and conditions making it a must to add to your daily diet.

Anemia:

High in iron, bananas can stimulate the production of hemoglobin in the blood and so helps in cases of anemia.

Blood Pressure:

This unique tropical fruit is extremely high in potassium yet low in salt, making it the perfect food for helping to beat blood pressure. So much so, the US Food and Drug Administration has just allowed the banana industry to make official claims for the fruit's ability to reduce the risk of blood pressure and stroke.

Brain Power:

200 students at a Twickenham (Middlesex) school were helped through their exams this year by eating bananas at breakfast, break and lunch in a bid to boost their brain power. Research has shown that the potassium-packed fruit can assist learning by making pupils more alert.

Depression:

According to a recent survey undertaken by MIND amongst people suffering from depression, many felt much better after eating a banana. This is because bananas contain tryptophan, a type of protein that the body converts into serotonin known to make you relax, improve your mood and generally make you feel happier.

Hangovers:

One of the quickest ways of curing a hangover is to make a banana milkshake, sweetened with honey. The banana calms the stomach and, with the help of the honey, builds up depleted blood sugar levels, while the milk soothes and re-hydrates your system.

Heart-burn:

Bananas have a natural antacid effect in the body so if you suffer from heart-burn, try eating a banana for soothing relief.

Morning Sickness:

Snacking on bananas between meals helps to keep blood sugar levels up and avoid morning sickness.

Mosquito bites:

Before reaching for the insect bite cream, try rubbing the affected area with the inside of a banana skin. Many people find it amazingly successful at reducing swelling and irritation.

Nerves:

Bananas are high in B vitamins that help calm the nervous system. Overweight and at work? Studies at the Institute of Psychology in Austria found pressure at work leads to gorging on comfort food like chocolate and crisps. Looking at 5,000 hospital patients, researchers found the most obese were more likely to be in high-pressure jobs. The report concluded that, to avoid panic-induced food cravings, we need to control our blood sugar levels by snacking on high carbohydrate foods such as bananas every two hours to keep levels steady.

PMS:

Forget the pills eat a banana. The vitamin B6 it contains regulates blood glucose levels, which can affect your mood.

Ulcers:

The banana is used as the dietary food against intestinal disorders because of its soft texture and smoothness. It is the only raw fruit that can be eaten without distress in over-chronic ulcer cases. It also neutralizes over-acidity and reduces irritation by coating the lining of the stomach.

Temperature control:

Many other cultures see bananas as a 'cooling' fruit that can lower both physical and emotional temperature of expectant mothers. In Thailand, for example, pregnant women eat bananas to ensure their baby is born with a cool temperature.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):

Bananas can help SAD sufferers because they contain the natural mood enhancer, tryptophan.

Smoking:

Bananas can also help people trying to give up smoking, as the high levels of Vitamin C, A1, B6, B12 they contain, as well as the potassium and magnesium found in them, help the body recover from the effects of nicotine withdrawal.

Stress:

Potassium is a vital mineral, which helps normalize the heartbeat, sends oxygen to the brain and regulates your body's water-balance. When we are stressed, our metabolic rate rises, thereby reducing our potassium levels. These can be re-balanced with the help of a high-potassium banana snack.

Strokes:

According to research in 'The New England Journal of Medicine' eating bananas as part of a regular diet can cut the risk of death by strokes by as much as 40%!

Warts:

Those keen on natural alternatives swear that, if you want to kill off a wart, take a piece of banana skin and place it on the wart, with the yellow side out. Carefully hold the skin in place with a plaster or surgical tape!

So you see a banana really is a natural remedy for many ills. When you compare it to an apple, it has four times the protein, twice the carbohydrate, three times the phosphorus, five times the vitamin A and iron and twice the other vitamins and minerals. It is also rich in potassium and is one of the best value foods around.

So maybe its time to change that well-known phrase so that we say,
Banana a day keeps the Doctor away!