

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

August 4, 2019

“Bananas Overall Healthful”

We all enjoy a good banana but what are its effects on health? Bananas may help a person reduce bloating, control their appetite, and replace processed sugars. Bananas are an excellent source of fiber. A medium banana contains 3.07 grams (g) of fiber, and the recommended daily intake for adults is 25g for those on a 2,000-calorie diet. Fortunately, studies show that there is a link between higher fiber intake and lower body weights. This nutrient may also help reduce and stabilize blood sugar levels. Fiber can help people feel full for longer, which may reduce the total number of calories that they eat. The body takes a long time to digest certain types of fiber, allowing it to regulate food intake better. Research studies looked at the effects of dietary fiber on appetite in 100 overweight but otherwise healthy adults. The results showed that an increase in dietary fiber reduced feelings of hunger, as well as how many calories the participants consumed. Fiber may also help lower cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of heart and artery disease. Unripe green bananas contain resistant starch. Resistant starch is a carbohydrate that does not break down easily in the small intestine. Instead, it passes through to the large intestine, which means that it does not increase blood sugar levels. Studies suggest that resistant starch could also help improve insulin sensitivity. The benefits that it provides for gut health can help with constipation and reduce the risk of colon cancer. Usually we associate bananas with their high potassium content, but they contain plenty of nutrients that are important for the body. The recommended daily intake of potassium is 2,600 milligrams (mg) for adult females and 3,400 for males. A medium banana contains 422 mg of potassium, which equates to about 12% of the recommended daily intake. Potassium helps regulate the levels of sodium in the body, which can lower blood pressure and help prevent heart disease and stroke. It is also vital for kidney health and can reduce the risk of kidney stones. Bananas are also a good source of magnesium. A medium banana contains 32 mg of magnesium, which is about 8% of the recommended daily intake. Magnesium is essential for energy production, nervous system function, and the regulation of blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Bananas are also a great source of energy when exercising. The results of a 2012 study showed that eating a ripe banana during exercise had a similar effect on endurance as a carbohydrate drink.

In the America that I love, bananas are a healthful addition to a balanced diet, as they provide a range of vital nutrients and are a good source of fiber. So, enjoy.

Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

Surgeon/Scientist/Patient Advocate

27439 Highway 441, Kentwood, LA 70444

985-229-6955 Home | 985-229-3760 – Fax | 985-514-0578 – Cell

rhowesmd@hughes.net | www.iwillfindthecure.org

