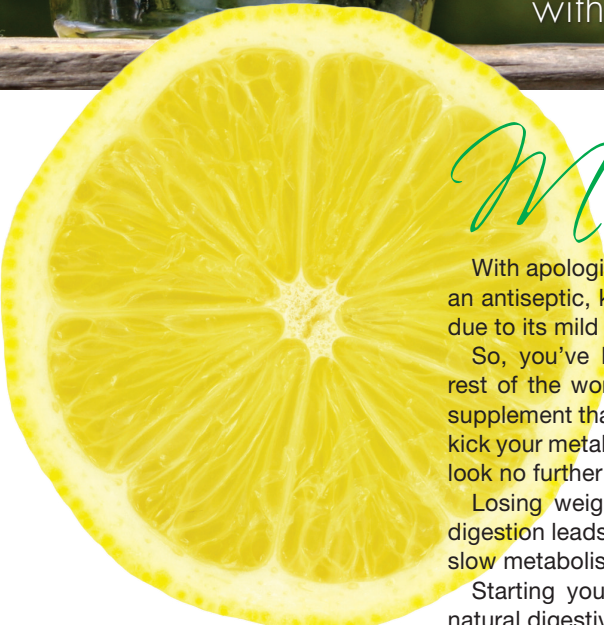




YOUR *Lemony* TICKET to health

With the ease of a squeeze, lemons can deliver a multitude of health-enhancing benefits. Get great skin, help with weight loss, a boost of energy and fight anxiety with this mis-prized fruit. By Gina Ostarly



*M*ost people think of lemon as something that goes into tea. Or even worse, as the star ingredient of lemon icebox pie. But can this little yellow fellow be more than just a sidebar to our life's fitness story? Sure can.

With apologies to milk, a lemon does a body good. The acid in lemons can work as an antiseptic, kill pathogenic bacteria and can help cleanse the system of impurities due to its mild diuretic effect.

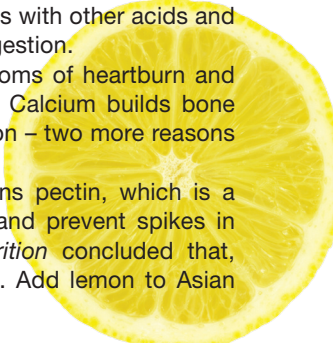
So, you've been searching for that "secret" that skinny people keep from the rest of the world, right? That magic ingredient that helps shed pounds? A miracle supplement that will boost the body's digestive and detox systems, curb appetite and kick your metabolism in high gear so you can lose that unwanted poundage. You need look no further than your backyard, as long as you have a lemon tree growing there.

Losing weight is nearly impossible without an effective digestive system. Poor digestion leads to the reduced nutrient absorption and retained toxin levels. Both can slow metabolism and make weight loss tougher.

Starting your morning with a glass of warm lemon water introduces a healthy natural digestive aid into your stomach. The citric acid interacts with other acids and enzymes in your stomach for a day's worth of problem-free digestion.

Lemons improve your digestive system by reducing symptoms of heartburn and bloating. It even stimulates the liver by dissolving uric acid. Calcium builds bone density and potassium helps the brain and nerves cells function – two more reasons lemons are smart food.

Lemon zest can aid weight loss because the zest contains pectin, which is a soluble, dietary fiber that can lower LDL cholesterol levels and prevent spikes in blood sugar. The *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* concluded that, after eating pectin, hunger levels are reduced for four hours. Add lemon to Asian



veggie dishes, grains such as Orzo and even cottage cheese to get a kick with a little zest!

LITTLE BUT POWERFUL

An average lemon weighs 100 grams. Of that, more than 90 grams is water. The rest is 8.63 grams of carbohydrates, .4 grams of protein and .4 grams of fiber. There is no fat nor cholesterol, but, there are 13 important vitamins. So, for a fruit that is almost all water, what's in there that's so good for fitness and health? The answer is citric acid.

LITTLE YELLOW DOCTOR

The medicinal purposes of lemon are many:

- for sore throat, dilute lemon juice with water and gargle frequently.
- a lemon slice bound over a corn overnight can relieve the pain.
- to relieve asthma symptoms, try a tablespoon of lemon juice an hour before each meal.
- to break up congestion, drink a big glass of hot water with the juice of a lemon added.

PICKING THE BEST FRUIT

When judging lemons at the grocery store, heavy is best. Those with more weight, per the same size, tend to have the most mineral content and sugar. A thick-skinned lemon will not be as heavy as a thin skinned lemon and will not have the desired sweetness or mineral content.

Looking at the stem end is also a good indicator of which lemons to choose. The best lemons will show faint, red lines radiating from the stem end. Don't worry about looking silly. The people thumping watermelons and sniffing cantaloupes will never notice you.

Most lemons from the United States are grown in California and Arizona. Eureka and Lisbon varieties are most often produced, but consumers rarely notice, as they differ little in appearance or taste. Peak harvest times are from July through August, so this is your time to get the freshest fruits. During the other months, most lemons are imported from Chile, Spain and the Bahamas.

GETTING JUICED

Two ounces of lemon juice per day is plenty to receive the desired benefits. That equals one whole lemon daily.

The lemon juice can be diluted more or less, according to taste.

Lemon juice has powerful antioxidants, which helps fight the free radicals, and can help ward off diseases like stroke, cardiovascular diseases and cancer. It has also been shown to lower blood pressure and raise the levels of HDL (good cholesterol).

Applied topically, lemon juice can dry acne and prevent more from forming. It's also good for relief of itching from bug bites. The low pH make is antibacterial. And since it's summer time, who hasn't tried using it to lighten their hair? It works, although, the results can be a bit unpredictable.

Lemon juice can be used as a mouthwash, too. The acid removes plaque and kills germs, but overuse could damage the tooth enamel. There are better choices for this purpose.

IN THE KITCHEN

Lemon juice is the "kick" in many recipes. It's also great as an ingredient for marinades because it kills the bacteria sometimes found in meats and seafood. The acid converts amines into nonvolatile ammonium salts for fish. It can break down tough collagen in meats, which tenderizes it, but it can also make the meat dry out faster during cooking. Adjust your cooking times accordingly.

Lemons also play well with others! Soaking sliced apples, bananas and avocados in a bath of lemon juice keeps them from oxidizing and turning brown. You can then use the leftover slices of lemon and the rind as a colorful garnish.

Need just a few drops of juice? Use a toothpick to spear the fruit, squeeze out what you need, then refrigerate the whole fruit. Like most other fruits, lemons should not be frozen whole. They will last up to 5 months in a refrigerator, although they will dehydrate. Lemon juice should be used the same day it is squeezed, but, it can be frozen.

AROMATHERAPY

Lemon juices and oils do not influence the human immune system, according to one of the most comprehensive studies done to date by

researchers at The Ohio State University. So while the old wives tale of "it will cure you" was put to rest, the study did show that the aroma of lemon oil does have a measurable impact on improving people's moods. Hey, nothing wrong with that.

CLEAN MACHINE

Lemon juice is used in many household cleaners. Again, the low pH acid does most of the work. The pleasant scent is a nice byproduct. Lemon oil has long been used in wood polishes, and the acidic quality can remove hardened wax buildup.

Have dirty copper pots and pans? Halve a lemon, then apply salt or baking soda to the cut end. Scrub the pots, and, the acid will help remove tarnish while the salt acts as an abrasive. Mixing lemon juice with baking soda can remove stains from plastic kitchenware. And as a room deodorizer, wiping down your cabinets with a mild mixture of lemon water both disinfects and leave a fresh scent – just like in the TV commercials.

THIS IS SHOCKING!

You can make a battery out of lemons! Many school-aged kids have performed an experiment by attaching electrodes to lemons and using them to power low-energy items such as small digital watches. Lemons do have power in many parts of your life, so make them part of your plan. **MS&F**

