



Grapefruit offers more than vitamin C

This time of year, I really enjoy having grapefruit for breakfast. I know it is a good source of vitamin C, but what else does it offer?

You're right. Just half of a small- to medium-sized grapefruit (3.75 inches in diameter) has about 40 milligrams of vitamin C — that's a good portion of the 75 milligrams daily recommended for women and 90 milligrams for men.

If you have a choice, opt for the pink or red types. For just a slight increase in calories (50 compared with 40), pink or red grapefruit offers significantly more vitamin A, beta carotene and lycopene than its paler cousin. Both types of grapefruit also offer some potassium and a gram or two of fiber.

For all of these reasons, grapefruit is an excellent option to include in your choice of five or more fruits and vegetables a day.

Experts recommend choosing grapefruit that is glossy, round, smooth and heavy for its size. Avoid grapefruit with brown or soft spots. You can store uncut grapefruit at room temperature for up to a week, or leave it in the refrigerator for up to eight weeks. But if possible, serve grapefruit at room temperature — it's juicier that way.

One thing everyone should be aware of: Grapefruit juice can interact with some types of prescription medication. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's

Fruit and Veggies Matter program (<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov>), the effect of grapefruit juice was discovered by accident when researchers were trying to determine if alcohol had an effect on a particular blood pressure medication. To hide the taste of the alcohol, the scientists put it in a glass of grapefruit juice. They found the alcohol didn't have an effect, but the grapefruit juice did — it greatly increased the medication's effects. That can be dangerous.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida (part of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service) offers detailed information about medications affected by grapefruit juice on its website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fs088>. Included are some drugs prescribed to treat high blood pressure, statin drugs to treat blood cholesterol, some anti-anxiety and antihistamine medications, as well as some drugs used to treat HIV/AIDS and immunosuppressant drugs used after transplant operations. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to be sure any prescription drugs you take aren't affected by grapefruit juice; if there's a conflict, it's best to avoid grapefruit or inquire if an alternative medication is available.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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