
New Research Demonstrates that Wild Blueberries May Support Cardiovascular Health

PORTLAND, Maine, May 7 /PRNewswire/ -- New research shows that Wild Blueberries may have a cardio-protective effect, improving vascular function and decreasing the vulnerability of blood vessels to oxidative stress. (Sources: *Journal of Medicinal Food*, 2009; Feb; 12(1): 21-8 and *Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry*, 2009, Jan 19) The studies contribute to a growing body of research supporting the potential protective effect of Wild Blueberries in the diet on cellular signaling within the vascular environment. These findings suggest that the consumption of Wild Blueberries could help regulate blood pressure and combat atherosclerosis.

"Our studies confirm our hypothesis that Wild Blueberry-enriched diets significantly diminish arterial constriction in animal models by relaxing blood vessels, which may have implications on blood pressure regulation in both animal models with normal blood pressure and ones with high blood pressure. We also discovered that Wild Blueberries operate differently in the above animal models, but the end result is to aid in maintenance of a functional endothelium which may help prevent vascular complications associated with hypertension," said Dr. Dorothy Klimis-Zacas, Ph.D., Professor of Clinical Nutrition and lead researcher from the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, University of Maine, Orono.

According to Dr. Klimis-Zacas, controlling oxidative stress and inflammatory responses in the vascular environment is key to cardiovascular health. "We continue to focus our research on the role of diet in disease prevention. Our work with animals fed a diet of whole fruit, like Wild Blueberries, takes research one-step further beyond an examination of fruit extracts and their impact on cell cultures. If we can control oxidative stress and inflammation through diet, we could see a protective cardiovascular benefit. Recently, we have also come to appreciate that the role of Wild Blueberry bioactive compounds and their metabolites is not only accomplished through their antioxidant properties but also through their ability to act as regulators of signal transduction pathways and may also affect gene expression."

Wild Blueberries and Antioxidants

According to Susan Davis, MS, RD, Nutrition Advisor to the Wild Blueberry Association of North America, Dr. Klimis-Zacas' research contributes to a growing body of evidence that Wild Blueberries, as part of a well-balanced diet, have the potential to reduce chronic disease risk and promote healthy aging. "Studies like these make it clear that food truly can be medicine and that healthy eating is critical to a long and healthy life. Something as simple as having one cup of fruits and vegetables at every meal will pay large dividends in health," said Davis. She noted that eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is key, but because USDA research findings using the Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity (ORAC) measure ranked Wild Blueberries highest in antioxidant capacity per serving, she recommends eating Wild Blueberries every day. The study showed that a serving of Wild Blueberries had more antioxidant capacity than a serving of cranberries, strawberries, raspberries, apples, and even cultivated blueberries. (*Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, 2004; 52:4026-4037)

Antioxidants are important in terms of their ability to protect against oxidative cell damage that can lead to conditions like Alzheimer's disease, cancer and heart disease - conditions also linked with chronic inflammation. The antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects of blue-purple foods like Wild Blueberries may have the potential to help prevent these diseases.

Wild Blueberry Association of North America

The Wild Blueberry Association of North America is a trade association of growers and processors of Wild Blueberries from Maine and Canada, dedicated to bringing the Wild Blueberry health story and unique Wild Advantages to consumers and the trade worldwide. To learn more about Wild Blueberries visit wildblueberries.com.

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