SKIN-ANTI-AGING CUCUMBER JUICE!

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ARE YOU COOL FOR CUCUMBERS?

Cucumbers are a key part of the Mediterranean Diet, a primarily plant-based style of eating that is recommended by the American Heart Association for its ability to help prevent a range of chronic conditions, such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes. A true superfood, cucumbers add flavor and crunch to any meal—no matter what diet you are on, or not!

Let's start by looking at their nutrient richness. Cucumbers contain vitamins and minerals that your body needs to function at its best including: magnesium, potassium, and vitamins K, A and C, supporting everything from bone health to immune strength. WebMD touts that vitamin K helps minimize blood clots and keeps your bones healthy. Vitamin A has many jobs, like helping with vision, the immune system, and the reproduction system.

Cucumbers are hydrating. Because our bodies are more than two-thirds water, adequate hydration is necessary to digest food, regulate body temperature, and keep organs and joints working smoothly. Water also helps you feel full, which can be important in maintaining healthy body weight.

While drinking good-quality water is the best way to stay hydrated, eating water-rich foods is essential, too. Cucumbers top the list of hydrating foods at nearly 96% water, followed by iceberg lettuce, celery, radishes, and tomatoes. Add some parsley, a dash of olive oil, and a pinch of salt, and you have a wonderful, nutritious summer salad in a snap! You can also add cucumber slices to your water to give it a refreshing flavor and nutrient boost—a win/win!

Cucumbers contain several types of antioxidants, including beta-carotene, fisetin and cucurbitacins. Antioxidants protect your cells and help fight free radicals, which can lead to inflammation, and chronic disease over time. To get the most antioxidant power from your cucumbers, scrub off any coating (wax or otherwise), but leave some of the skin on.

CUCUMBER JUICE

Cucumbers are a surprisingly healthy food. They're made up of about 95% water, which makes them outstanding for hydration and all the benefits that come with it. And that other 5% of cucumbers—especially concentrated in the skins, so don't peel them—provides a rather intense number of antioxidants and nutrients for such a "small package."

In summary, cucumbers have strong anti-inflammatory, anticancer, antidiabetic, digestive, and heart-protective properties. They also have great anti-aging effects for your skin.

Meanwhile, the spinach and citrus in this incredibly refreshing recipe provide plenty of very potent health benefits of their own!

INGREDIENTS:

- One small-to-medium cucumber
- Handful of fresh spinach leaves (if oxalates are a concern, consider arugula instead, which has very low oxalate levels)
- Wedge of citrus (lemon, lime, orange)
- 1/4-to-1/2 cup water (coconut water works great, too)
- Touch of honey (optional)

Simply add all the ingredients to a blender, blend until smooth, and enjoy! As always, I recommend organic ingredients if you are able. If you do use them, consider leaving the peel on whatever organic citrus wedge you choose for extra antioxidants and vitamin C.

No need to scrub cucumbers if you buy them organic, as the healthiest choice, unless you grow them in your own back yard.

As a super bonus, their general antioxidant properties, cucurbitacins have shown promise as a potential cancer therapy in several recent studies, according the Houston Healthcare. And researchers are looking into how fisetin may help prevent and treat neurological disorders like Alzheimer's disease. Wow, that's good news!

The not-so good news is cucurbitacins can taste bitter—we've all tasted a bitter cuke—and they cause gas in some people. "Burpless" cucumbers are bred to have less of these antioxidants for easier digestion.

Cucumbers are blood-sugar friendly, low in calories and carbohydrates, and high in fiber and

water, which means they're unlikely to raise blood-sugar levels if you have, or are at risk for, diabetes. Cucumbers can be part of a healthy diet for anyone, but they're especially helpful if you're managing your blood sugar.

Another great benefit of cucumbers is their versatility. You can easily add them to salads and sandwiches for a satisfying crunch, make a cold soup, juice them, or pickle them. Plus, their versatility goes beyond eating—you can even use cucumber slices to cool or moisturize your skin.

WebMD reminds us that eating cucumbers will keep you hydrated all day long. And getting extra water through fruits and vegetables ensures that cells get better nutrition to fight off exhaustion and stay energized throughout the day. Hence, cucumbers make for a good snacking option. Plus, the fiber boost helps you stay regular.

While you can easily pick up cucumbers at your local store, farm stand, or farmers market, you can also reap the benefits of cucumbers when you grow them yourself. All you need is a sunny patch of earth, some cucumber seeds, and a little patience. Whatever way, be sure to get cucumbers on your plate! ■