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“AMERICA’S SUPER FRUIT” MAY HELP RESET BODY CLOCK

Cherries Offer Natural Source of Antioxidant Melatonin

LANSING, Mich., March 3, 2009 – Setting the clocks forward this spring can have the unfortunate side effect of disrupting your body’s clock. In fact, research indicates that losing even one hour of sleep may affect us for days or even weeks.ⁱ

Experts recommend the antioxidant melatonin as one way to help regulate the body’s sleep-wake cycle. Produced naturally by the body in small amounts, melatonin plays a role in inducing sleepiness at night and wakefulness during the day. Recent studies have revealed that frozen tart cherries – “America’s Super Fruit” – are one of the few known researched food sources of melatonin.

Russel J. Reiter, Ph.D, a nutrition researcher at the University of Texas Health Science Center and one of the world’s leading authorities on melatonin, says while melatonin supplement pills have been heavily promoted as a sleep aid, foods such as cherries may be a better alternative for boosting the body’s own supply of melatonin.

“When eaten regularly, tart cherries may help regulate the body’s natural sleep cycle and increase sleep efficiency, including decreasing the time it takes to fall asleep,” says Reiter. “And, because cherries are so rich in other antioxidants, such as anthocyanins, you get other important health benefits.”

Melatonin may also be helpful for treating jet lag for international travelers, for new parents who are up all night and for late-shift workers trying to adjust to a new schedule. Increasing melatonin also has been shown to help with sleep-onset insomnia in older adults with a melatonin deficiency.

The Power of Cherries

Instead of sourcing exotic berries from halfway around the world, Americans can find powerful antioxidants in “America’s Super Fruit,” cherries. Nearly all (94 percent)

cherries consumed in the U.S. are grown here and available in a variety of products and applications, making it easy to enjoy the fruit year-round.

Cherries may also offer a variety of homegrown preventive health benefits. In addition to melatonin, cherries contain powerful antioxidants called anthocyanins – which provide the distinctive red color of the fruit and may hold the key to many of its health-promoting qualities. Research suggests that these disease-fighting compounds possess antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-aging and anti-carcinogenic properties.ⁱⁱ

Recent studies from the University of Michigan revealed that cherry-enriched diets in animals lowered multiple risk factors for heart disease. In 2007, researchers found that cherry-enriched diets in animals lowered total blood cholesterol levels and reduced triglycerides (fatty acids).ⁱⁱⁱ And, in 2008, the University of Michigan researchers found animals fed a cherry-enriched diet saw reduced total body weight and fat by 14 percent, in particular the “belly fat” that is most often associated with heart disease risk.^{iv}

To learn more about the health benefits of cherries and to find recipes and tips, visit www.choos cherries.com. There you can also download a copy of the Cherry Nutrition Report, a compendium of the more than 65 published studies on the potential health benefits of cherries.

Choose Cherries Today

Try this delicious Cherry Smoothie for a refreshing pick-me-up any time of the day.

Ingredients:

2 cups frozen tart cherries

1 ripe banana, peeled

1 cup cherry juice blend (or other juice)

Directions:

Put frozen cherries, banana and cherry juice blend in container of electric blender or food processor. Puree until smooth. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 (8-ounce) servings

Nutrition Info:

Nutrition Facts per 1-cup serving: 86 cal., 0 g total fat (0 g sat. fat), 21 g carbo., 0 mg chol., 1 g pro., 2 g fiber, 14 mg sodium. Daily RDA values: 8% vit. A, 8% vit. C, 2% calcium, 4% iron.

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The Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI) is an organization funded by North American tart cherry growers and processors. CMI's mission is to increase the demand for tart cherries through promotion, market expansion, product development and research. For more information on the science supporting the unique health benefits of cherries and for cherry recipes and menu ideas, visit www.choosecherries.com.

ⁱ Kantermann T, Juda M, Merrow M, Roenneberg T. The human circadian clock's seasonal adjustment is disrupted by daylight saving time. *Current Biology*. 2007;17:1996-2000.

ⁱⁱ Blando F, Gerardi C, Nicoletti I. Sour cherry (*Prunus cerasus* L) anthocyanins as ingredients for functional foods. *Journal of Biomedicine and Biotechnology*. 2004;2004:253-258.

ⁱⁱⁱ Seymour EM, Singer AAM, Bennink MR, Bolling SF. Cherry-enriched diets reduce metabolic syndrome and oxidative stress in lean Dahl-SS rats. *Experimental Biology* 2007 225.8, Presented in minisymposium 225, Dietary Bioactive Compounds: Chronic Disease Risk Reduction.

^{iv} Seymour EM, Lewis A, Kirakosyan A, Bolling S. *The Effect of Tart Cherry-Enriched Diets on Abdominal Fat Gene Expression in Rats*. American Dietetic Association FNCE 2008.