

The nutritional value of this fruit and its health benefits have led to its acquiring a whole new importance.

The fig can constitute a part of just about any special diet. Since figs do not naturally contain fat, sodium or cholesterol but have high levels of fibre, they are an ideal food for those trying to lose weight. At the same time, figs have higher mineral contents than any other known fruit. Forty grams of figs contains 244 mg of potassium (7% of the daily requirement), 53 mg of calcium (6% of the daily requirement) and 1.2 mg of iron (6% of the daily requirement). The calcium level in figs is very high: The fig ranks second after the orange in terms of calcium content. A crate of dried figs provides the same level of calcium as a crate of milk.

Figs are thought of as a medicine which gives strength & energy to long-term patients as they seek to recover. They eliminate physical and mental difficulties; give the body strength & energy. The most important nutritional component of figs is sugar, which comprises 51-74% of all fruits. The sugar level in figs is one of the highest. Figs are recommended in the treatment of asthma, coughs and chills.

Japanese scientists have discovered an aromatic aldehyde compound, benzaldehyde (C₆H₅CHO) in figs. This chemical compound was extracted from figs and has proved to be effective in fighting carcinogens.

Metallothionein (MT) : A material which is produced by human & animal brains in small quantities. This material is a protein that contains Sulfur which can easily bind with zinc, iron and phosphorus. This substance is considered very vital to the human body in the sense of reducing cholesterol, performing metabolism, strengthening the heart, and controlling breath. MT production increases gradually between the ages of 15 to 35 years. Then, the production level decrease till it stops at the age of sixty. That is why it was not easy to obtain MT from humans. Also, small amount of MT was found in animals.

Therefore, scientists kept searching for MT in plants. A team of Japanese scientists searched for this magical substance that works as a removal of the symptoms of aging. The team found subject substance only in two types of plants; fig and olive.

After MT was extracted from figs & olives, scientists found that the use of MT from fig or olive alone did not give the expected benefit for the human health. The benefits were only seen when MT that is extracted from fig was mixed with MT that is extracted from olive. After noticing that, the Japanese team tried to find the best mix ratio between fig & olive that provides the best influence. The best mix ratio was found to be 1 fig to 7 olives!

Carbohydrates compounds known as the soralins have also been discovered in figs; these compounds play an important role in fortifying blood against a number of disease-causing viruses and parasites, such as hepatitis C. This carbohydrate group is found in large amounts in figs; in its syrup, juices and jams.

Figs have also proved to be beneficial for breastfeeding mothers, in treating hemorrhoids, chronic constipation, gout, chest diseases, menstrual disorders, epilepsy, mouth ulcers, gingivitis, tonsillitis, pharyngitis, leucoderma, removing warts, healing injuries, and different kinds of ulcers.

The benefits we have restricted ourselves to mentioning here are an indication of the compassion Allah feels for human beings. Our Lord provides the substances required by human beings in this fruit, which is so pleasant to eat, already packaged and at the ideal levels for human health. The way that this special blessing from Allah is mentioned in the Quran may indicate the importance of the fig for human beings. From the point of view of human health, the nutritional value of the fig was only established with the advance of medicine and technology. This is another indication that the Quran is indisputably the Word of Allah, the Omniscient.



**The fig tree
is one of a
few trees
in existence that
do not have
blossoms.**

Glory be to Allah

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The Fig

“By the fig & the olive”

Quran 95:1

There are many sacraments in the Quran: sacraments upon the sun, moon, olive, fig.

Allah swears sometimes on the stars, sun or the whole sky and sometimes on day and night. There is no doubt that these mysterious pledges bear lots of secrets and wisdoms.

Allah made the fig tree an example that symbolizes the various phases of spiritual development of the human being: faith, guidance, misguidance and disbelief. The fig tree is one of a few trees in existence that do **not** have blossoms. The similitude of the human creation and the fig is that the blossoms of the fig tree are within it, just as the blossom of the believer is within them, in their heart.

The reference to the fig in the first verse of Surat at-Tin is a most wise one in terms of the benefits imparted by this fruit.

Parts of the fig's creation wonders

The fig is a complex accessory fruit that is actually an inside-out flower cluster called a synconium, formed as a result of the growth of synconia in the shape of a cone. Tiny female flowers (pistil) line the inner surface of the synconia while male flowers (stamens) spread out around the outer layer which is narrow at the top. The female flowers usually mature before the male ones. Allah Has assigned the fig wasp (blastophaga) to help pollinate the fig flowers. The relationship is symbiotic; fig flowers provide a warm safe place for blastophaga larvae to stay and feed in until they become adults. As the adult wasps make their way out of the flower, their bodies come into contact with the male flowers, pollen sticks to the body of the insects that then carry the pollen to the female flowers, pollinating them and allowing fertilization to begin. Three generations of flowers are found in the fig tree. The first generation contains the male and insect-hosting flowers. The second generation of flowers are female ones pollinated by the insects coming out of the first generation flowers. These insects fertilize the flowers producing the main harvest of the fig tree. The third generation flowers contain insect-hosting flowers where the insects spend the winter.

Who else but Allah could set up such an accurate reproductive system for the fig tree? Who else but Allah could teach the fig wasp that its home is in the flower of fig tree to assist fertilization as it moves from one flower to another? The relationship between this insect and the fig flower is one of the most amazing examples of symbiosis between plants and insects.

The Benefits for Human Beings

Figs have a higher fibre level than any other

fruit or vegetable. One single dried fig provides two grams of fibre: 20% of the daily recommended intake. Research over the last fifteen years or so has revealed that the fibre in plant foods is very important for the regular functioning of the digestive system. It is known that fibre in foods assists the digestive system and also helps reduce the risk of some forms of cancer. Nutritionists describe eating figs, which are rich in fibre, as an ideal way of increasing one's fibre intake.

Fibrous foodstuffs are divided into two types: soluble and insoluble. Foods rich in insoluble fibre facilitate the passage of substances to be expelled from the body through the intestine by adding water to them. They thus accelerate the digestive system and ensure its regular functioning. It has also been established that foods containing insoluble fibre have a protective effect against colon cancer. Foods rich in soluble fibre, on the other hand, have been shown to reduce cholesterol levels in the blood by more than 20%. These are therefore of the greatest importance in reducing the risk of heart attack. Excessive levels of cholesterol in the blood collect in the arteries, hardening and narrowing them. Depending on which organ's blood vessels the cholesterol accumulates in, disorders connected to that organ arise. For example, if cholesterol accumulates in the arteries that feed the heart, problems such as heart attacks result. Accumulations of cholesterol in the kidney veins can lead to high blood pressure and kidney deficiency. Furthermore, the intake of soluble fibre is important in terms of regulating blood sugar by emptying the stomach because sudden changes in blood sugar can lead to life-threatening disorders. Indeed, societies with fibre-rich diets have been shown to have far lower incidences of illnesses such as cancer and heart disease.

It is also another major health advantage for soluble and insoluble fibres to be present at one and the same time. It has been shown that when both forms are present together, they are much more effective in preventing cancer than when they are on their own. The presence of both forms of fibre, soluble and insoluble, in the fig makes it a most important foodstuff in this regard.

Dr. Oliver Alabaster, Director of the Institute for Disease Prevention at the George Washington University Medical Centre, refers to figs in these terms: ... [H]ere is an opportunity to add a really healthy, high fiber food to your diet. Choosing figs and other high fiber foods more frequently means that you'll naturally choose potentially harmful foods less frequently-and this is great for your lifelong health.

According to the California Fig Advisory Board, it is believed that the antioxidants in fruit and vegetables protect against a number of diseases. Antioxidants neutralize harmful substances (free radicals) that arise as a result of chemical reactions in the body or else are taken in from the outside and thus prevent the destruction of cells. In one study performed by the University of Scranton, it was determined that dried figs had a much higher level of the phenol makeup, which is rich in antioxidants, than other fruits. Phenol is used as an antiseptic to kill micro-organisms. The level of phenol in figs is much higher than that in other fruits and vegetables.

Another study, by Rutgers University in New Jersey, revealed that due to the essential fatty acids omega-3 and omega-6 and phytosterol contained in dried figs, they can play a considerable part in reducing cholesterol. It is known that omega-3 and omega-6 cannot be manufactured in the body and need to be absorbed with food. Furthermore, these fatty acids are indispensable to the proper functioning of the heart, brain and nervous system. Phytosterol permits the cholesterol in animal products, which has the potential to harden the heart's arteries, to be expelled from the body without entering the blood stream.

Despite being one of the oldest fruits known to man, the fig-described as "nature's most nearly perfect fruit" by the California Fig Advisory Board-has been rediscovered by food producers.



"If I had to mention a fruit that descended from Paradise I would say it is the fig, because the fruits of Paradise do not have pits... eat from these fruits for they prevent hemorrhoids & piles and help gout"
Prophet Muhammad (peace)