



Apple Cider Vinegar – good for your health

By Jacqueline Fields, MD and founder of *Dr. Fields' Sacred Skin* | March 11, 2014

The cider vinegars, made from fermenting fruits such as apples, have little value as cleaners or herbicides. Instead, these are the types of vinegar associated with a number of different health benefits when taken internally. There are two basic categories of cider vinegars:

- Regular apple cider vinegar
- Organic apple cider vinegar with the "mother" included

When purchasing an apple cider vinegar, you'll want to avoid the perfectly clear, "sparkling clean" varieties you commonly see on grocery store shelves. Instead, you want *organic, unfiltered, unprocessed* apple cider vinegar, which is murky and brown. When you try to look through it, you will notice a cobweb-like substance floating in it. This is known as "mother," and it indicates your vinegar is of good quality. While it may look suspicious at first, in this case, it's the murky looking stuff you want. As with everything else, the more processed a food is, the less nutritious it is, and this holds true for apple cider vinegar.

Surprisingly enough, while apple cider vinegar has historically been prized for its health benefits, little research has been done to evaluate its therapeutic actions. However, lack of scientific studies is a common problem for many natural and alternative therapies.

Perhaps the most researched and the most promising of apple cider vinegar's benefits are in the area of type 2 diabetes. Several studies have found that vinegar may help lower blood glucose levels. In 2004, a study cited in the American Diabetes Foundation's publication *Diabetes Care*¹ found that taking vinegar before meals significantly increased insulin sensitivity and dramatically reduced the insulin and glucose spikes that occur after meals. The study involved 29 people, divided into three groups:

1. One third had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.
2. One third had pre-diabetic signs.
3. One third was healthy.

The results were quite significant:

- All three groups had better blood glucose readings with the vinegar than with the placebo.
- People with pre-diabetic symptoms *benefitted the most* from the vinegar, cutting their blood glucose concentrations by nearly half.
- People with diabetes improved their blood glucose levels by 25 percent with vinegar.
- People with pre-diabetic symptoms had lower blood glucose than the healthy participants after both drank vinegar.

A [follow-up study](#) geared at testing vinegar's long-term effects yielded an unexpected but pleasant side effect: moderate weight loss. In this study, participants taking two tablespoons of vinegar prior to two meals per day lost an average of two pounds over the four-week period, and some lost up to four pounds. In 2007, another study cited by [WebMD²](#) involving 11 people with type 2 diabetes found taking two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar before bed lowered glucose levels in the morning by 4 to 6 percent. Although the research to date looks favorable, more studies are needed to confirm the extent of vinegar's insulin stabilization benefits.

Other apple cider vinegar “cures”

Although this article and many others advocate the benefits of using vinegar therapeutically, I really think that this is an inferior approach. From my perspective, it would be far better to use large quantities of fermented foods to get these types of acids because you will then also help to recolonize your gut with beneficial bacteria. However, vinegar is easier and certainly safe to use, so you can put your toe in the water by trying it first. Garrett, however, has been a long-time proponent of vinegar, recommending it for a number of uses.

"Apple cider vinegar might cure more ailments than any other folk remedy," he writes. Vinegar apparently provides at least some cures for allergies (including pet, food and environmental), sinus infections, acne, high cholesterol, flu, chronic fatigue, Candida, acid reflux, sore throats, contact dermatitis, arthritis, gout and the list goes on... It also brings a healthy, rosy glow to the complexion and can cure rough scaly skin. Apple cider vinegar is also wonderful for animals, including dogs, cats and horses. It helps with arthritic conditions, controls fleas, repels flies, and gives a beautiful shine to their coats."

As an example, Garrett has shared the following recipe with me, which can help soothe a sore throat:

"Use 3 tbsp. of apple cider vinegar, 3 tbsp. lemon juice, 2 tbsp. of honey and 16 oz. water, and warm to sipping temperature and sip. Adding juice from chopped ginger can be used for more power."

What can account for apple cider vinegar's health benefits?

Many who tout apple cider vinegar's wide-ranging benefits claim its healing power comes from the abundance of nutrients that remain after the apples are fermented. However, standard nutritional analyses of apple cider vinegar have found it to be a surprisingly poor source of most nutrients. For example, the one milligram of calcium found in a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar does not come close to the 1,000 milligrams a typical adult needs each day.

It has also been claimed that soluble fiber in the vinegar, in the form of pectin, binds to cholesterol and helps carry it out of your body, thereby improving your lipid profile. However, apple cider vinegar contains no measurable pectin or any other fiber, for that matter.

Its magic can also not be traced to vitamin content. According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), apple cider vinegar has no measurable vitamin A, vitamin B6, vitamin C, vitamin E, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, beta-carotene, or folate -- and it's equally lacking in amino acids, lycopene, or any other nutritional elements.

Still, despite the fact that it's devoid of many of the traditionally valued nutrients, evidence of apple cider vinegar's health benefits has been witnessed for hundreds -- maybe thousands -- of years. So, what can explain this mysteriously beneficial elixir?

It may be partially related to the fact that vinegar is a diluted acid, specifically acetic acid, which helps to normalize your body's pH. This likely improves nutrition, by optimizing your gut flora and helping eradicate pathogenic or disease-causing bacteria, and by serving as growth accelerators for beneficial bacteria that typically thrive in more acid environments. This is also one of the reasons why eating fermented foods is so important.

Other uses for vinegar

Last but not least, vinegar can be used to remove certain pesticides and bacteria from your fresh produce. Of course, you don't need apple cider vinegar for this—any basic white vinegar will do. Gayle Povis Alleman, MS, RD recommends a solution of 10 percent vinegar to 90 percent water as a bath to briefly soak produce.³ Just place your veggies or fruit in the solution, swish it around, and rinse thoroughly. Just don't use this process on fragile fruits (like berries), since they could be damaged in the process or soak up too much vinegar through their porous skins.

Apple cider vinegar has also long been used as a natural hair care product. Its acidity is close to that of human hair; it's a good conditioner and cleaning agent, as well as an effective germ killer. You can visit www.apple-cider-vinegar-benefits.com for information on how to make a vinegar hair rinse.

While we need a great deal more research to investigate vinegar's full healing potential, it can certainly be useful in a variety of ways, for a variety of conditions. It's definitely a great multi-purpose tool to have in your pantry.

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