



Do Potatoes Shorten Your Life?

With reference to Michael Greger M.D. FACLM on Mar 26, 2026



Do potato eaters live longer or shorter lives than non-potato eaters?

Is there a link between potato intake and the incidence of hypertension? Harvard researchers followed the diets and diseases of more than 100,000 men and women for decades and found that those who ate potatoes on most days—not only French fries and potato chips, but even mashed, boiled, or baked—appeared to be at higher risk of developing high blood pressure. But what do people put on potatoes? Salt, not to mention butter, so might the potatoes just be innocent bystanders? The researchers made attempts to tease out the effects of salt and saturated fat, and there still seemed to be a link between potato consumption and high blood pressure.

Maybe potato eaters are meat-and-potatoes people. After all, these same Harvard researchers found that meat, including poultry, seemed to be associated on its own with an increased risk of hypertension, and the same goes for even a moderate amount of canned tuna. So, in the potato study, they were careful to try to factor out any effects from the consumption of all types of animal flesh. Yet, they still found an increased risk and became concerned that associating potato intake with hypertension could be a “critical public health problem.” It was assumed potatoes might actually decrease high blood pressure, given their high potassium content, but they found evidence of the opposite effect.

As I discuss in my video *Do Potatoes Increase the Risk of High Blood Pressure and Death?*, two similar studies performed in Mediterranean Europe did not find any association between potato consumption and high blood pressure, though. Perhaps this is because they don't smother their potatoes in butter and sour cream in that neck of the woods and instead eat potatoes with other vegetables. Now, the Harvard researchers tried to control for the salty and fatty dietary components associated with eating potatoes in the West, just like these researchers tried to factor out all the extra vegetables, but you can't control for everything.

One of the main reasons we care about blood pressure is because we care about the consequences. In two studies done in Sweden, where they primarily eat their

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Building an Anti-Inflammatory Diet

nutritionfacts.org Mar 19, 2026

Certain whole plant foods—especially berries, turmeric, garlic, and ginger—can significantly lower meal-induced inflammation, whereas antioxidant supplements do not show the same benefit.

Anthocyanin-rich foods like blueberries and raspberries consistently reduce IL-6 and other inflammatory markers, even when added to high-fat, high-glycemic meals.

A whole food, plant-based diet—not just any plant-focused diet—can substantially reduce key inflammatory biomarkers like C-reactive protein and IL-6, outperforming diets that include processed plant foods or animal products.

Fighting Cancer with Whole Plant Foods

nutritionfacts.org Mar 10, 2026

Whole plant foods contain diverse bioactive compounds that influence all the hallmarks of cancer, something single-focus drugs rarely achieve. All the nutrients create a vast number of possible interactions, an example of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, a concept known as food synergy.

A plant-centered diet is a practical cancer prevention strategy. Eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes—and reducing alcohol, processed foods, and meat—supports the body's natural defenses against cancer.

Does Black Cumin Seed (Nigella Sativa) Help with Weight Loss?

nutritionfacts.org July 3, 2025

The spice black cumin, which is unrelated to regular cumin, is known for its use in traditional medicine and cuisine, with historical mentions dating back to ancient times.

Research has validated its health benefits, including improved cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar control, sometimes with results comparable to medications like statins.



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potatoes boiled, no evidence was found that potato consumption was associated with the risk of major cardiovascular disease. No relationship between potato consumption and risk of premature death was found in Southern Italy either. In the United States, however, potato consumption was associated with increased mortality: a whopping 65% increased risk of dying from heart disease, a 26% increased risk of fatal stroke, a 50% increased risk of dying from cancer, and an increased risk of dying from all causes put together. However, this association disappeared after adjusting for confounding factors. In other words, it wasn't the potatoes at all. Potato eaters must just smoke more, drink more, or eat more saturated fat or something. Once you control for all these other factors, the link between potatoes and death disappears.

This was confirmed in the NIH-AARP study, the largest such study of diet and health in human history. If you separate out just the potatoes, researchers find they are not associated with increased risk of death, with the possible exception of French fries, which are associated with an increased risk of dying from cancer. Put all the studies together—20 in all—and no significant association has been found between potato consumption and mortality, though again, fried potatoes may be the exception. Even just twice a week, fries may double one's risk of dying prematurely, independently of other factors, but the consumption of unfried potatoes seemed to be neutral.

When you run the numbers, the more plant-based you eat, the longer you live, and the lower your risk of cardiovascular disease. In other words, more plant foods and less animal foods are associated with a significantly lower risk of dying prematurely. This benefit was limited, though, to those eating the healthier plant-food diets. However, the researchers were surprised that those eating the less healthy plant-based diets with processed plant-based junk did not live significantly shorter lives. Maybe that's just because they were eating fewer animal products, and that's really the primary determinant of lifespan here, or maybe the lack of an association between less healthy plant-based diets and mortality is because potatoes were kind of coming to the rescue. And indeed, higher intake of potatoes did appear protective; so, given these conflicting results, future studies may consider just resigning fried potatoes to the unhealthy list.

Now, in terms of mortality, fried potatoes may not be as bad as fried meat—fried chicken and fried fish—but that's not really saying much. The French fry/death data gave the industry trade group Potatoes USA a bit of a chip on its shoulder, reminding readers that observational studies can only prove correlation, not causation, to which the authors replied, "Our data add to the pressing public health calls to limit fried potato consumption." French fries may be so bad for you that it wouldn't be ethical to do an interventional study and randomize people to eat them.



Baked Purple Kumara



Ingredients:

2 large	purple sweet potatoes
1 T	olive oil
1t	garlic powder
1t	paprika
¼t	fine sea salt



Method:

Preheat the oven to 220°C

Wash the sweet potatoes well. Carefully **cut** the potatoes into wedges.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat. **Place** the potato wedges on the sheet. **Drizzle** the olive oil over the potatoes and **sprinkle** on the spices and salt.

Stir the potatoes around with a spatula until all the potatoes are coated with the vinegar and spices.

Bake the sweet potatoes for about **20-25 minutes**, turning them half way through.