

## Top Banana

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### **Question: I was recently told to avoid bananas if I want to lose weight. Can bananas make you fat?**

Bananas are the most popular fruit in the nation. Canadians put away more bananas each year compared to other fruits, such as apples and watermelon. Although they come in hundreds of varieties, most of us are only familiar with the supermarket staple known as the cavendish. The banana plant is actually the world's largest herb, and each finger is a berry.

### **Banana Diet Trends**

These days not everyone is on the banana bandwagon. In particular, a few big name diet book gurus have raised concerns that snacking on a banana is bad, because it is high in carbohydrates. With 27 grams of carbohydrate, one banana contains more carbohydrates that is recommended that dieters should eat in an entire day. Other diet books claim bananas go beside white bread, potatoes, baked goods and unfavorable refined carbohydrates like soda pop. Some books claim they promote fat storage and carry a high glycemic rating, forcing the pancreas into insulin overdrive.

### **Bananas are a Health Food**

There is plenty of nutritional evidence that states bananas are a wise choice. Bananas are low in calories, as they contain only 100 calories. They are half the calories of most granola bars, and have one-third the calories of most muffins or bagels. Bananas are not high in sugar and have the same glycemic index as most all fruits. Scientific research reports no evidence that they will spike your blood sugars or increase fat stores. They are extremely low in fat, containing less than 1 gram of fat. They are loaded with fibre making you will feel full and satisfied after eating them. One banana also adds 2 grams of soluble fibre, which helps to lower blood cholesterol.

Bananas are nutrient-rich. They contain vitamin B6, folate, and vitamin C and are potassium powerhouses. Due to all their potassium, bananas help lower high blood pressure and replace potassium loses after exercise. Potassium is necessary for proper muscle function in active individuals and athletes. And another bonus, bananas are an easily digested source of energy. Athletes frequently peel a banana before a race for quick energy. In addition, bananas are high in magnesium, a mineral that helps bones absorb calcium.

Bananas are extremely portable, as you do not have to have a knife to eat them, or have to cut them up and put them in a container. They can be eaten on their own, or can be added to smoothies, quick breads, cereals and even a curry.

### **Eat Bananas but watch the Extras**

According to the largest survey of its kind conducted in Canada, Canadians are making poor food choices resulting in a growing rate of obesity. The review of the Provincial Nutrition Survey recently identified inadequate intakes of folate, vitamins B6, B12, and well as minerals iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium and zinc.

The study revealed Canadians consumption of fruits and vegetables is very low, and their overall caloric intake has increased. We now know that most of us are “overfed and undernourished”. We are eating too much of packaged foods that is overly processed and low on the nutrient scale. We need to focus on nutrient-dense foods such as bananas that provide calories but also fibre, vitamins and minerals.

A healthy and well-balanced diet can provide the appropriate calories and nutrients needed to maintain a healthy weight or to lose weight. A diet rich in vegetables and fruits will also reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.



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There is no reason to avoid eating bananas or any particular vegetable or fruit.

Bananas will not make you fat. Nutrition experts advocate a diet that is 50 to 60 % carbohydrates, emphasizing whole grains, vegetables and all fruits. The only way a banana will hurt you is if you slip on its peel.

Interested in learning how better nutrition can help you?

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