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Drinking Montmorency cherry concentrate reduces effects of gout

Drinking Montmorency concentrate significantly helps to reduce the effects of the painful condition gout, according to new research.

Northumbria University researchers, publishing their findings in The Journal of Functional Foods this weekend, have found that after drinking a

Montmorency cherry concentrate, uric acid levels in the body significantly reduced in just a few hours.

Gout occurs when excess uric acid, a naturally-occurring substance found in the body, crystallises in the joints. It is an extremely painful condition that can be debilitating for sufferers. In the UK alone, gout is reported to affect one in 14 men and one in 35 women.

Tart Montmorency cherries are proven to be extremely rich in a number of plant compounds that possess anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Gout attacks are known to respond to anti-inflammatory medication, and anecdotal evidence from gout sufferers suggested that after ingesting Montmorency cherries, the negative effects of their condition were reduced.

Dr Glyn Howatson, a physiologist in the Department of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation at Northumbria University, and his PhD student Phillip Bell were keen to test whether uric acid levels would be affected with consumption of a Montmorency cherry concentrate.

In the single blind, two-phase study, 12 healthy participants were invited to drink CherryActive's Montmorency cherry concentrate to test how it affected the levels of uric acid in their blood and urine. They drank either 30ml or 60ml of the concentrate mixed with 100ml of water. Blood and urine samples were taken at regular intervals following consumption of the concentrate.

Two hours after drinking the cherry concentrate, uric acid levels in urine had increased by around 250%, indicating that the body was quickly excreting uric acid. This was reflected in blood tests, with uric acid levels in blood decreasing by around 36% eight hours after drinking the concentrate.

Unexpectedly, the findings also revealed that while the 60ml dose of cherry concentrate increased the volumes of plant compounds within the blood, it brought no additional benefit in lowering uric acid or inflammation compared to the 30ml dose.

Dr Howatson explained: "The study shows that uric acid was quickly clearing from the body with lower levels evident following consumption of the Montmorency cherry concentrate. We demonstrated a drop in blood uric acid, an increase in urinary uric acid and a reduction in an inflammation marker in just a few hours.

"This is an exciting first step to applying this intervention to a clinical population that suffer from gout. While the condition can be managed with pharmacological agents, more and more people are increasingly reluctant to use them because of potential side effects and are keen to use natural interventions.

“What is especially interesting is that only a relatively small amount of Montmorency cherry concentrate is needed to bring about the positive uric acid-lowering effects.”

Previous research at Northumbria University using CherryActive has also highlighted that consuming Montmorency cherry concentrate brings benefits relating to sleep and exercise. Drinking the concentrate before and after intense exercise significantly enhances muscle function recovery and reduces inflammation. The cherries were also shown to improve sleep quality and quantity due to their melatonin levels. Melatonin is the naturally occurring hormone, which regulates sleep in humans and animals.

John Carey, Director of Cherry Active Limited, added: “Montmorency cherries have long been recognised as bringing significant health benefits relating to improved sleep quality, rapid recovery from exercise-induced soreness and improved care of joints. Having heard anecdotal evidence that it was also bringing relief to those suffering from gout, we are very pleased to see that the findings of this study have confirmed the additional health benefits that our Montmorency cherry concentrate can bring.”

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