

Monday, June 10, 2013

The Amazing Date... a Fruit for MORE than Just Pregnancy!

Another perfect food for Pregnancy, and everyone!

I discovered a research article about the beneficial effects of eating dates towards end of your pregnancy! I knew NOTHING about dates, and had to do some research, and I have discovered that dates are wonderful little fruits and should be consumed by everyone :)



The date (*Phoenix dactylifera*) is a sweet tasting fruit which grows on the date palm, originating in the Middle East and African Regions of the world. There are a variety of date palm species and over 14 varieties of date fruits. Dates may be one of the **top 10 foods you should eat**. You can use them in so many different recipes (sweet potatoes, salads, desserts!) and they have a long shelf life. The list of various fatty acids, minerals, nutrients, amino acids, vitamins, elements... is so long, this fruit is amazing!



Dates are composed of:

- At least 15 different minerals such as Potassium, Calcium, Fluorine (*great for teeth!*), Iron, and Zinc
- 14 types of fatty acids
- 23 types of amino acids
- At least 6 vitamins
- Dietary fiber
- and more! (Al-Shahib & Marshall, 2003)

I hope it is already clear that **dates can be a healthy part of every diet**, but now let's look specifically at what dates may be able to do during pregnancy.

A study from the Jordan University of Science and Technology and published in the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (Al-Kuran et al., 2011) found significant effects on certain birth measures after women consumed dates for four weeks prior to delivery. Participants were recruited at 36 weeks of pregnancy

and asked to either (1) consume six pieces (60-70g) of date fruit per day (n=69) or (2) consume NO date fruit (n=45) for the last four weeks of their pregnancy (until labor began).

They found statistically significant results for:

- Cervical dilatation measured at hospital admission was significantly greater in the date-eating mothers (mean = 3.52cm) than the non-date-eating mothers (mean = 2.02cm). The early stage of labor (Latent Phase) may be shorter in women who consume dates than in women who don't.
- Upon admission at the hospital, 83% of mothers who consumed dates had their membranes still intact and only 28% of these women were given Pitocin in their labor (synthetic Oxytocin); 60% of the non-date-eating mothers had their membranes intact upon admission and 43% were given Pitocin. *Having your membranes (amniotic sac) intact upon admission to the hospital helps prevent additional hospital intervention and risks like infection. If your membranes are broken your risk of infection increases with time (and number of vaginal exams) putting you at risk of receiving Pitocin to "speed things up".*
- Spontaneous labor occurred in 96% of the women who ate dates and only 79% of the women who didn't. *They didn't explain this more, such as when women were induced if the labor didn't begin spontaneously, but based on their study parameters that enrolled women at 36 weeks gestation with the intention to consume dates for four weeks likely means that their definition of a full-term pregnancy is 40-41 weeks (longer than our current idea of "full-term" from 37-39 weeks).*

Additionally, and I didn't bullet this because the finding wasn't statistically significant, but the cesarean section rate was higher in non-date-eating women (27%) than in the date-eating women (13%) - I think a larger sample size would show this is significant, but it wasn't for this small group... just more food (or dates) for thought!



wiseGEEK In the original article's introduction, the authors state "there is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that date fruit can contribute significantly to a healthy pregnancy by means of **preventing anemia, reducing nausea, controlling blood pressure, regulating blood sugar levels, helping restore depleted calcium, expelling toxins, and increasing strength and immune resistance**". They cite research by *Al-Shahib & Marshall, 2003*, the same authors as above, who have researched the components of dates and health benefits from eating them.

<http://wisdomandbirth.blogspot.com/2013/06/the-amazing-date-fruit-for-more-than.html>