Dear Alice,

I've heard claims that indulging organic apple cider vinegar on a daily basis can help control weight, control blood pressure, prevent acne, etc. Does this really work? Will organic and non-organic apple cider vinegar yield different effects? Thanks in advance.

Answer

"Apple cider vinegar a day keeps the doctor away" doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, does it? Even still, many people claim that this product of fermented crushed apples yields a variety of health benefits including those that you mentioned. Usually taken in liquid, powder, or pill form before meals, it's most often used to aid digestion since the high acetic acid content helps break down food. In addition to this, it has also been used for centuries to treat fungal infections and sunburn. Although this may spark a domino effect on other aspects of health, there is no scientific proof that it has any effect on weight, blood pressure, or acne.

A common misconception about apple cider vinegar is that it curbs appetite and promotes fat burning, but physiologically, even though acetic acid intake may temporarily facilitate loss of water weight, it doesn't appear to affect fat. In fact, the high acidity of the vinegar may cause erosion of tooth enamel, throat irritation, and drug/supplement interactions (particularly with insulin and diuretics). It also acts as a blood thinner, so people who are on blood-thinning medications may want to reconsider its use.

Because the confirmed health benefits of apple cider vinegar are often a result of its high nutrient content (including iron, calcium, copper, and potassium), the choice between organic and non-organic is one to consider carefully. Non-organic apple cider vinegar has undergone pasteurization, the process of heating the liquid to a very high temperature to kill bacteria. As a result, the vinegar is much clearer and more attractive to consumers but in the process has lost the bulk of its nutrient content. Depending on what the consumer is aiming to gain from apple cider vinegar, this could affect the health benefits they experience. Then again, the potential bacteria content in organic (unpasteurized) apple cider vinegar could be problematic. Regardless of the nutritional supplement, a health care provider could be consulted before starting any alternative treatment.

Overall, if the reason for using apple cider vinegar is to lose weight, reduce blood pressure, or prevent acne, there are other treatments whose effects have been scientifically confirmed. In
terms of weight loss, the key is to consume fewer calories than you burn on a daily basis. Routine physical exercise and a diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein are your best bet. For more guidance on addressing these health concerns, see the Q&As below. You may also want to consider speaking with a health care provider or registered dietitian.

In the end, an apple a day is more likely to keep the doctor away!

Alice!

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