

Papaw power!

Every part of papaya, or papaw, is a phenomenal fruit pharmacy, writes naturopath Caroline Robertson.

PAPAYA or papaw is a pear-shaped parcel of goodness nicknamed "the fruit of the angels" by explorer Christopher Columbus. Dr T.P. Lucas, who founded Brisbane's Vera Papaw Hospital in 1911, treated patients solely with papaw remedies. This sunset-coloured evergreen tree thrives in the tropics, with India producing the most - over 5 million tons annually. Papaya has been prized over centuries for contraception, constipation, digestive disorders, growths, worms, wound healing, dengue fever, and pain. Papaya's anti-inflammatory agent papain helped heal Harrison Ford's ruptured disc so he could continue filming 'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom'. Evidence is now emerging that papaya leaves are even potent against 10 types of cancer, amongst other actions.

Tree of life

Add this amber elixir to your diet for the following conditions:

Arthritis The vitamin C and enzymes chymopapain and papain reduce pain, while papaya's calcium, potassium, magnesium and copper also build up our calcium bone bank to reduce osteoarthritis.

Asthma High doses of vitamin C and beta-carotene, as are present in papaya fruit, have been shown to reduce asthma. Papaya leaf, available as an extract, tea or capsules, was shown to have an inhibitory effect on the cytokine cascade which is often involved in asthma.

Blood sugar imbalance Papaya's high fibre contributes to lowering blood sugar and lipids while regulating insulin. Fermented papaya, along with green tea, can prevent diabetes, according to the Centre of Excellence for Biomedical and Biomaterials Research at Mauritius University. An Indian dish to avert diabetes is sautéed papaya flowers with rice. Papaya leaf juice has potent antioxidants that assist complications of diabetes, like kidney damage and fatty liver.

Cancer Gold Coast lung cancer patient Stan Sheldon was given only five months to live in 1962. He prepared an Aboriginal medicine of papaya leaf and stem decoction, and drank 200ml three times a day. After two months his doctors were astonished to see the malignancy had disappeared. Since then Sheldon has passed the recipe onto other cancer victims and says, "Sixteen of them were cured." A University of

Florida study documented papaya leaf's powerful anticancer properties and impact against over 10 types of cancer. It was also proven to be non-toxic, even in large doses, and to reduce the negative effects of chemotherapy. Its cancer-curing properties are attributed to acetogenins which modulate ATP in mitochondria of specific cells, so affecting the action of specific cells and the growth of blood vessels that nourish them.

Papaya fruit is also protective against cancer, particularly of the colon, due to its antioxidants, phytonutrients, folate, flavonoids, and fibre. The digestive enzymes high in fruits turning from green to yellow may dissolve the fibrin layer surrounding cancerous tumours, preventing them from being destroyed by our immune system.

Cataracts and macular degeneration We know carrots are awesome for eyes, but papaya is a superior sight tonic. A 2014 study showed the bioavailability of beta-carotene from papayas was approximately three times higher than that from carrots and tomatoes. Beta-carotene is the orange-coloured antioxidant which prevents macular degeneration and protects the eyes, according to a study published in the Archives of Ophthalmology.

Delayed periods Papaya's hot potency and gentle laxative action helps to stimulate stagnant menses. The leaf tea has been used for period pain and the seeds as a contraceptive for both genders.

Digestive problems Papaya's proteolytic enzymes drive digestion by breaking down proteins and cleansing the colon. The seeds kill worms and amoebas and the fermented leaf extract is a powerful probiotic. Its high fibre acts as a gentle laxative, countering constipation.

Heart health Papaya protects our heart in multiple ways. Its fibre, phytonutrients and antioxidants prevent cholesterol clogging arteries, and ensure it doesn't get oxidised. Papaya's potassium regulates heart rate while the carpaine content in its fruit and seeds slow heart rate. Papaya's folic acid fortifies blood vessels by deterring destructive homocysteine from forming. One study showed that fermented papaya supplements taken for 14 weeks reduced inflammatory markers and improved the LDL:HDL ratio.

Immunity Pop some papaya instead of a pill for your vitamin A and C needs. The immune system thrives on these antioxidants protecting you from infections.

Malaria and dengue fever Studies by Dr Sanath Hettige on 70 dengue fever patients showed papaya leaf juice hastened their recovery by increasing white blood cells plus platelets, normalising clotting, and repairing the liver.

Did you know an average papaya has over 300 percent of our recommended daily vitamin C?

Skin If you want a natural tan and a smooth, clear complexion, papaya is your skin saviour. Absorb its natural vitamin C and antioxidants lycopene, lutein, zeaxanthin, and cryptoxanthins to promote collagen while also protecting from free radical degeneration. Externally, the fruit latex heals scars and the inner skin juice is a natural exfoliator, due to its enzyme papain. Use the brightening, clarifying fruit as a mask for countering acne, eczema, and pigmentation.

Weight Papaya is perfect for weight loss with its high fibre, low calories, and high digestive enzymes. It satisfies one's appetite while clearing accumulated toxins.

Caveats: Papaya isn't advised for those who are pregnant, trying to conceive, or allergic to latex. The seeds should only be taken in moderation by adults. Excessive seeds can cause numbness and cardiac suppression. ✳

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✳ Mellow yellow remedy

Papaya provides plentiful enzymes, phytonutrients, fibre, and anti-cancer constituents. An average papaya has over 300 percent of our recommended daily vitamin C; it also has abundant antioxidants vitamin A, E, carotenoids, and lycopene, which are all anti-ageing and cancer-fighting. Papaya leaves and twigs are proving promising for cancer treatment, due to their acetogenin compound which is "10,000 times more effective than a common chemotherapy drug," according to the American National Institute of Health. Papaya's lycopene also protects against prostate cancer, according to several studies.

The fruit has significantly high levels of potassium, folate, and fibre. Its fibre guards against high cholesterol and colon cancer and breaks down fibrin, which reduces the risk of blood clots and stroke. Mellow yellow papaya can calm you due to its alkaloid content, which slows the heart rate and reduces blood pressure as well as killing parasites and amoebas.

The bitter seeds are powerful anti-parasitic agents and are taken as juice in India and Africa for this purpose. Papaya seeds have been used to combat dengue fever and liver cirrhosis in South America and the South Pacific. They're also a rich source of vitamins A, C and E. Taken in moderation, the dried seeds can be used as a pepper substitute with their digestive proteolytic enzymes. Studies showed papaya seed extract was effective at killing E. coli, salmonella and staph infections. Commercially, papaya's milky juice is used as a chewing gum base, in toothpaste and meat tenderisers.