

Cactus: Food and medicine for future

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Cactus is one of the members of the family Cactaceae. Apart from being an ornamental plant, it renders various health benefits. But it remains unused in modern medicine and nutrition to date. When it is taken with a balanced diet, it regulates blood pressure, sleep, hunger, thirst and cures indigestion too with the help of its health-supporting nutrients. Consuming the fruit of cactus can reduce the oxidative damage to lipids and improves the antioxidant level in the human body. The seeds or oils from the cactus reduce the serum cholesterol level that in turn is known to reduce the atherogenic risk factors according to the studies made recently. During clinical trials performed with mice, the researchers have found that one of the variants of cactus extracts effectively inhibited the tumour cells' growth by suppressing their division and modulating the expression of cancer genes. Cactus could not only act against cancers but can also be used as dairy cattle fodder for obtaining a better quality of milk and enhancing the colour of butter. Cactus can also be consumed in the form of jam, syrup, alcoholic drinks, etc. Even though cactus provides enormous advantages for improving human health, it remains an underutilised plant. If research is encouraged, its potential might be used efficiently in the food, cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries in the future.

Keywords: Cactus, Cancer, Inhibition, Antioxidant, Food, Pharmaceuticals, Dairy

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