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# Black Currants: Natural Rescue from Alzheimer's and Dementia

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The epidemic of Alzheimer's takes an enormous toll: as the disease ravages the brain, robbing people of memories and awareness, it disconnects them from those they love. And it's increasing: the Alzheimer's Association reports that Alzheimer's is now the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S. Some 5.4 million Americans now suffer from the disease, affecting millions of households. But the race to find treatments is uncovering many promising new developments, including black currants. These tiny, dark berries contain powerful antioxidants that may help slow the disease's damage, and thus prolong people's lives.

## Assaulting the brain

Of all the dementia cases in the U.S., Alzheimer's accounts for some 80 per cent. The disease's toll on the brain is akin to an all-out attack, resulting in badly reduced mental abilities and tragic, debilitating memory loss. Researchers have linked the disease to abnormal clumps in the brain, known as amyloid plaques, and tangled bundles of fibers called neurofibrillary tangles. The specific role these plaques and tangles play in the disease is not entirely known. But scientists believe they have to do with blocking communication among nerve cells and disrupting the vital processes those cells need to survive. It's the death of these nerve cells that cause the devastating symptoms of Alzheimer's.

## The power of black currant extract

What makes black currant so promising in the fight against Alzheimer's is its concentration of potent anti-oxidants. These anthocyanins may help prevent the degradation of blood vessels and Alzheimer's-related dementia. Cholesterol build-up in the walls of blood vessels causes a reduced flow of blood to the brain -- which in turn can cause vascular dementia.

Researchers presented a promising paper to the American Heart Association showing that anthocyanins from blackcurrant extract may have beneficial effects. A membrane-enriched blackcurrant extract -- supplied by Iprona AG under their BerryPharma brand -- was tested for its effect on the arteries. The study compared the effects of the extract to the effects of a placebo: and the extract had a clear improvement on flow, resulting in a decrease of the plaques associated with the disease.

## Reducing protein levels

A study published in the *Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry* found that feeding mice with Alzheimer's disease anthocyanin-enriched bilberry and black currant extracts resulted in far lower protein levels in their brains than mice fed a control diet. The proteins, called amyloid precursor proteins (APP), are thought to be a key risk factor for Alzheimer's. Another difference between the two groups of mice in the study had to do with spatial working memory: those fed the control diet had far more memory loss than those fed the anthocyanin-enriched bilberry and black currant extracts.

## Delaying aging's damage

Tufts University research, published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, studied the effects of high-antioxidant fruits (such as blackcurrant, boysenberry, cranberry, strawberry, dried plums, and grapes) on oxidative stress in brain cells, which has been linked to risk of Alzheimer's disease. The study found these fruit extracts had a strong protective effect, noting that the high levels of anthocyanins and

polyphenols in dark berries may indeed help protect aging brain cells, and may slow the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

### Traditional cure

Black currant has long been a traditional cure, used to treat digestive ailments, colds, and flu Blackcurrant seed oil is an increasingly popular anti-inflammatory. But now it's clear this nearly black berry may also help fight the devastating effects of cognitive decline. As we learn more about [ways to help stay healthy as we age](#), keeping our minds bodies busy, we're also learning about the power in natural ingredients such as black currants. Given the fact that by midcentury, according to the Alzheimer's Association, someone in the U.S. will develop the disease every [33 seconds](#), that a tiny, dark berry could hold so much potential is promising news indeed.

*Originally posted at Natural News.*

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