Celery Juice and Cancer

Celery juice is everywhere! Have you heard it may help treat cancer?

June 6, 2019 By Danielle Penick

Celery, a seemingly underappreciated and often ignored produce item suddenly began to play a staring role almost overnight. Social media influencers have made some pretty impressive claims about the latest wellness trend. This past year I was witness to multiple acquaintances posting about their new celery juice cleanse with video tutorials of their journey. After a few other celery juice testimonials through various social media platforms, I wondered where this idea emerged. And how did celery juice become immediately sensationalized, so much so that grocery stores can barely keep up with the demand?

The instant spotlight of this juice can solely be attributed to a man named Anthony William—better known under his alias, the Medical Medium. He calls himself a medium because he in fact believes that he can communicate with a high level spirit due to his special magical powers. He says the spirit tells him “extraordinarily accurate health information that is far ahead of its time.” He also says that celery juice is the most powerful medicine of our time and even wrote a book on the topic.

William’s bio on Amazon even highlights his “ability” to communicate with a spirit.

William’s book title labels celery juice as the most powerful medicine of our time.

William is a social media influencer without any science, medical, or nutrition training. He’s the author of numerous books and a contributor for Gwyneth Paltrow’s Goop, which is well known for

its pseudoscientific claims. Additionally, he doesn't have scientific evidence for his claims whatsoever. When I sat down to do research for this piece I was a bit surprised at how much more quickly I wrote it than most of my posts. But there was not much for me to investigate because he believes that he is ahead of the science and has discovered things that scientists haven't. For example, William claims he found 'undiscovered cluster salts,' which are compounds that give celery juice (not whole raw celery though) its miraculous properties. He purports that these unknown salts can cling to toxins and dangerous salts from food and draw them out of your body. William also thinks that the cluster salts break down viruses and harmful bacteria, and flushes them out of our bodies. He even goes so far as to say that it is a miracle juice and is the greatest tonic of all time.

William also claims that celery juice clears the body of heavy metals and toxins. But our kidneys and liver already do an incredibly effective job of detoxing and purifying our blood—and they don't need any help doing so. These organs do this 24/7 no matter what you eat (but don't get me wrong; eating healthy is still recommended for many other reasons). If your organs weren't working properly, however, you'd be incredibly sick in the hospital receiving dialysis as celery juice (or any other juice for that matter) wouldn't even come close to fixing your problem. If someone claims a food or product "detoxes" you should ask them to explain what the mechanism is by which said item removes toxins, what specific toxins it removes, and what symptoms these toxins cause and at which dose. You'll be hard pressed to get a direct answer, I bet.

William recommends drinking 16 ounces of celery juice first thing in the morning on an empty stomach. To put this into perspective, on average, it takes an entire bunch of celery to make this. About 95% of celery is water, however. While it does offer some vitamins and minerals like vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C, and folic acid, the amounts are small. Other veggies such as kale or spinach offer more nutrients. But to be fair, celery does house some phytochemicals called apigenin and luteolin. These plant chemicals may have anti-cancer and antioxidant chemicals in cell and animal studies; we don't have any strong evidence in humans. It's important to note that there are a lot of foods that have anti-cancer affects in a lab setting when cells are isolated in a petri-dish, but it doesn't always translate the same way in humans sadly. Apigenin and luteolin are also not specific to celery—you can obtain these compounds from many fruits and veggies such as cabbage, beets, parsley, lettuce, tomatoes, apples, leeks, cherries, grapes, and broccoli.

Despite the lack of scientific evidence, this doesn't stop some people from promoting the vibrant green drinks ability to prevent you from needing chemotherapy to treat your cancer or many other bold claims. Often, people who have more followers online are largely more convincing than the credible sources who may have less followers. These influencers thrive on personal testimonials and anecdotes, which are quite powerful and often are hard to argue with. Hearing about a simple cure-all is so tempting too! And if we could all do something as easy as drinking juice to cure cancer, I mean who wouldn't do that right? But, as I've mentioned in many previous posts, there is no such thing as a miracle food, supplement, or single cure-all for cancer, unfortunately. Cancer is a complex disease that is constantly evolving, and each type of cancer is treated like a different disease. It's why cancer often has more than one medical intervention for each patient. It almost always requires a multifaceted therapy approach. So if anyone tells you there is a single cure-all I would remain extremely cautious!

Example of claims found online (Disclaimer: this is not an endorsement for this website as it is not evidence based).

Claims from William’s website about what celery juice will help fix. Of note, this is not even the full list.

Celery does provide a good amount of water, some nutrients, but not as many as a lot of other vegetables. There’s not something special in celery that other veggies don’t harbor. While celery

juice isn't in-and-of-itself harmful, it can be pretty pricey and time consuming to drink daily. If you like the taste and have the money to spend, then celery juice might be a good option. It may help you stay hydrated, but it doesn't do much more. If it helps you drink more fluid then it might be a great addition to your diet—however, plain ol' water works great too. Celery juice could make a difference in your health if you weren't eating any produce or don't typically drink much water.

If you are switching out celery juice for other sugar-sweetened beverages like soda or highly sweetened coffees, then this might also make you feel better. But if you are already well hydrated and eating produce regularly, it's probably not going to do much for you. And as previously discussed in a post about juicing, fiber is typically removed during the juicing process, which is what provides some of the most beneficial parts to plants. Fiber helps to fill you up, lower cholesterol, helps with blood sugar regulation, and even helps with cancer prevention and bowel regularity. Some vitamins and minerals are bound to fiber and you can be missing out on these nutrients as a result of juicing instead of eating it intact. Whole celery helps to feed the healthy bacteria in our bodies. Nutrition-wise you will be in a better place keeping the fiber intact.

By Dose Juice on Unsplash

This root veggie is an alkaline food, which adds to its popularity. But most veggies are alkaline and I've also debunked the idea of alkaline foods curing cancer here. It would be great if alkaline foods had this ability though. Celery juice just happens to be the new health fad, similar to that of kale, lemon water, alkaline water, collagen, cauliflower ice cream, and charcoal-infused foods. There really isn't any evidence to suggest that juicing has any superior benefits to eating whole foods, and it may even be worse.

Next year, I wouldn't be surprised to see another food trend taking effect, like broccoli juice, beet

juice, or kale juice, for example. Because of research, we know that overall eating patterns have a large affect on health outcomes more than any single food does. My recommendation: Eat more produce and eat all the colors, as each color represents a different vitamin and mineral. We benefit from all fruits and veggies, but sometimes that can be less exciting. Many plant chemicals show large promise for cancer prevention, which is one of the main reasons that the American Institute of Cancer Research recommends eating 5-10 servings a day for cancer prevention.

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