Iceberg Lettuce: Healthy Leafy Green or Nutrient-Poore Filler?

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Iceberg lettuce is a common yet controversial ingredient. Although it’s considered a staple for many classic salads and sandwiches, it has also drawn criticism from nutrition-conscious consumers as other greens like
kale and spinach nutrition take center stage.

Despite being labeled a nutrient-poor alternative to other greens, iceberg lettuce has several benefits and definitely deserves a slot in a balanced diet. In fact, it’s rich in several nutrients and may help boost bone health, enhance vision and ramp up weight loss.

So is iceberg lettuce bad for you? Keep reading for everything you need to know about this popular leafy green.

**What Is Iceberg Lettuce?**

Iceberg lettuce is a type of lettuce known for its mild flavor and crisp texture. It has a pale green color and a round head that closely resembles other lettuce varieties, such as cabbage.

Thanks to its crunchy texture and versatility, it has long been considered a staple for salads and is often used as a topping for burgers, sandwiches and wraps.

Despite its reputation as a nutritionally void ingredient, it contains several important nutrients and can definitely be a healthy addition to your daily diet.

**Nutrition Facts**

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Although there are a low amount of calories in iceberg lettuce, each serving contains a good chunk of fiber, vitamin K and vitamin A.

One cup (about 72 grams) of shredded iceberg lettuce contains the following nutrients:

- 10.1 calories
- 2.3 grams carbohydrates
• 0.6 grams protein
• 0.1 grams fat
• 0.9 grams dietary fiber
• 17.4 micrograms vitamin K (22 percent DV)
• 361 international units vitamin A (7 percent DV)
• 20.9 micrograms folate (5 percent DV)
• 0.1 milligrams manganese (4 percent DV)
• 2 milligrams vitamin C (3 percent DV)
• 102 milligrams potassium (3 percent DV)

The iceberg lettuce nutrition facts also boast a small amount of vitamin B6, iron and calcium.

Benefits

1. Promotes Weight Loss

Because each serving contains a low amount of iceberg lettuce calories, adding this tasty ingredient to a healthy diet could potentially help promote weight loss.

In fact, according to one study published in Nutrition & Diabetes, increased fruit and vegetable intake was associated with improved weight loss and fat loss, suggesting that adding healthy vegetables — like iceberg lettuce — to your diet could be beneficial if you’re looking to lose weight.

One of the top iceberg lettuce benefits is its vitamin K content. Although it may be most well-known for its ability to maintain healthy blood clotting, vitamin K also plays a key role in bone health.
Vitamin K is closely involved with bone metabolism and helps increase levels of a protein that is needed to maintain calcium stores in the bones. According to a 2003 study in *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, lower intakes of vitamin K were associated with decreased bone mineral density in women, demonstrating why it’s incredibly important to include plenty of healthy vitamin K foods in your diet.

### 3. Low-Carb Substitute

If you’re following a low-carb or ketogenic diet, many high-carb foods like bread, wraps and buns are typically off the table. Fortunately, iceberg lettuce has a crisp, firm texture, which makes it an awesome low-carb substitute for wraps, sandwiches and burgers.

Thanks to the low amount of carbs in iceberg lettuce, you can still enjoy many of your favorite foods as part of a low-carb diet by swapping in iceberg lettuce. Not only can it help you keep your carb consumption in check, but there are also a low amount of calories in iceberg lettuce, which can also help boost weight loss as well.

### 4. Supports Eye Health

Green leaf iceberg lettuce is a great vitamin A food, packing around 7 percent of the recommended daily value into each cup. Getting enough vitamin A in your diet is absolutely essential to maintaining healthy vision and may even help protect against some eye disorders.

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In particular, is a common condition that is characterized by the deterioration of the macula, which is the central portion of the retina. It is considered the leading cause of vision loss and believed to impact around 10 million Americans, which is more than cataracts and glaucoma put together.
In addition to vitamin A, research suggests that many other nutrients found in lettuce could be beneficial for eye health. For instance, in one study, older adults who took a supplement containing vitamin A, zinc, copper, vitamin C and vitamin E had a 25 percent lower risk of developing advanced age-related macular degeneration over a six-year period thanks to these eye vitamins.

How It Compares to Other Lettuce

So how does iceberg lettuce compare to other greens, such as the health benefits of kale, arugula or spinach?

Much like other types of lettuce, iceberg lettuce is low in carbs and calories. It also provides a hearty chunk of fiber in each serving, along with other important micronutrients like vitamin K, vitamin A and vitamin C.

However, the main difference between iceberg lettuce vs. cabbage and other varieties comes down to its nutritional content. In fact, because iceberg lettuce has a high water content, it contains a lower amount of several important vitamins and minerals.

When comparing the nutritional value of iceberg lettuce vs. romaine, for example, a single serving of romaine lettuce nutrition contains 11 times more vitamin A, five times as much vitamin C and nearly triple the amount of vitamin K. Meanwhile, other types like spinach and kale are higher in magnesium.

Uses

Iceberg lettuce is widely available at most supermarkets and grocery stores and can be found in the produce section alongside other types of lettuce as well.
Look for a head of lettuce with no visible spots or signs of spoilage on the outer leaves. Be sure to wash thoroughly before using and store in the refrigerator to extend its shelf life as long as possible.

Of course, the most popular way to use lettuce is by using it as a base for salads and topping with your choice of fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds and dressings. You can also mix it with other greens to add a bit of variety and color to your meal.

Iceberg lettuce has a crisp, crunchy texture that also works well as a substitute for burger buns and wraps to cut the carb content of your favorite recipes. Alternatively, try adding a bit to tuna salads, sandwiches and grain bowls to add a few extra nutrients to your dish.

How to Grow

Iceberg lettuce is easy to grow, making it a popular crop for novice gardeners and green thumbs alike.

If planting indoors, start by planting the seeds in a shallow tray and covering with a bit of potting soil. Be sure to plant around six to eight weeks before the last spring frost to ensure optimal growing conditions.

Place the tray in a window or area where it can receive around 12 hours of sunlight daily, and keep the soil moist by watering regularly.

he plants can be transplanted outside. Be sure to place a sun shade over the plants for the first few days as they can rot or wilt in hot weather.

Once the head has formed, you can begin to harvest the lettuce. Harvesting before the head bolts or a flowering stalk appears is key to prevent the plant from developing an unpleasant bitter taste.
Recipes

The options for how to use this type of lettuce goes way beyond the basic iceberg lettuce salad. In fact, you can also use it in place of wraps or buns, toss it onto your favorite sandwiches or even stir-fry it for a simple yet satisfying side dish.

Need more ideas? Here are a few iceberg lettuce recipe options to try at home:

• Classic Wedge Salad
• Roasted Buffalo Cauliflower Lettuce Cups
• Stir-Fried Iceberg Lettuce
• Bunless Burger Recipe

Risks and Side Effects

With all the iceberg lettuce recalls constantly being announced — such as the 2019 salad recall — many people wonder: Is iceberg lettuce safe? Unlike other foods, iceberg lettuce is almost always consumed raw, which increases the risk of foodborne illness, as cooking can help kill off many harmful pathogens.

Bagged and pre-cut produce is at a higher risk of contamination, which is why it is recommended to opt for loose leaf lettuce instead.

Some people may also be allergic to lettuce, which can cause severe symptoms, including anaphylaxis. If you experience any adverse side effects after eating lettuce, discontinue consumption immediately and talk to your doctor.
Finally, while iceberg lettuce can definitely fit into a healthy diet, it’s important to remember that it’s not as nutrient–dense as other types of lettuce. Therefore, it’s best to pair with a variety of different leafy greens and other vegetables to help round out your diet.

**Conclusion**

- Although it’s often been criticized as a nutrient–poor leafy green, iceberg lettuce contains several important nutrients and can easily fit into a balanced diet.
- In fact, the iceberg lettuce nutrition profile is low in calories but contains a good amount of fiber, vitamin K, vitamin A and folate.
- Thanks to its high water content and nutritional value, it may help increase weight loss, promote bone strength and support healthy vision.
- Like other types of leafy greens, iceberg lettuce is low in calories and carbohydrates. However, it’s also lower in many vitamins and minerals compared to varieties like kale, spinach, arugula and romaine.
- It may be most well–known as a base for salads, but it can also be swapped in for buns and wraps, used as a topping for sandwiches or stir–fried and served as a delicious side dish.