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**The Fruits Of Summer**

**By News Canada**

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by: **News Canada**

Peaches, plums and nectarines are a rite of summer – and a must for healthy summer skin

(NC)–It's a sure sign of summer: mounds of sweet, juicy peaches; plump, flavorful plums; and aromatic nectarines that seem to arrive with the warm days of late spring and leave with the first cool autumn breezes.

Perhaps it's just a coincidence that these same peaches, plums and nectarines – long considered a delicious source of nutrition like most fruits and vegetables – are also important sources of antioxidants, essential for maintaining healthy skin. When the sun begins to shine, these fruits begin to work their magic.

A recent study conducted by the University of California – Davis found that these three summer stone fruits are rich in phenolic compounds which act as antioxidants, and include ascorbic acid (Vitamin C), carotenoids (orange or red colored substances found in many fruits) and provitamin A/beta-carotene.

Here's how antioxidants work to protect the skin. Photoaging – skin changes resulting from exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays – happens where there is an imbalance of pro-oxidants (free radicals) and antioxidants in the skin's cells. The sun's UV rays can accelerate free radical production while at the same depleting antioxidants. Photoaging usually manifests itself in rougher, drier, wrinkled and less elastic skin.

Antioxidants protect skin cells by counteracting free radical activity. In addition,

Vitamin C is critical for the formation of collagen in the skin, and beta-carotene (transformed in the body into vitamin A) is important for maintaining the growth and health of skin cells.

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All are good reasons to stock up on tree fruits between now and September. The best reason is just to enjoy these juicy, flavorful fruits that seem to be bursting with sunshine – all the while combating the harmful effects of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays.

### A long legacy

According to *The Peach Sampler*, a cookbook compiled by Eliza Mears Horton, peaches originally came from China: the fruit is referred to in the writing of Confucius in the fifth century. Peaches then traveled, via caravan routes, to Persia, Greece and Rome. In the United States, peaches first appeared only years after the pilgrims landed in 1620.

Interestingly, peaches, plums and nectarines are members of the rose family. Nectarines, which many consider a form of the peach, is actually a very distinct fruit and likely predates the peach. Nectarines take their name from the drink of the Olympic gods: "nectar."

Plums come in two types: Japanese and European. Japanese plums – tarter, juicier and larger than European plums – are the most abundantly produced varieties in the United States. They were first introduced to the United States in the late 1880s when legendary plant breeder Luther Burbank imported the parent stock from the Satsuma province of Japan. They come in a variety of colors – red, purple, black, green and yellow. European plums were introduced in the United States by the Pilgrims: they tend to be blue or purple, more oval-shaped, smaller and sweeter than the Japanese varieties.

Today, there are more than 1.7 billion pounds of plums, peaches and nectarines packed each spring and summer in the United States, with more than 75 percent grown in California.

The state commercially produces more than 200 varieties of peaches, 200 varieties of plums and 175 varieties of nectarines. Most peach varieties are freestone, meaning the flesh of the fruit easily slips away from the pit. For nectarines, freestone varieties are generally available in June and July. All plum varieties are clingstone.

Summerwhite varieties of peaches and nectarines have a pale white skin with splashes of bright pink, while the flesh is light pink or white. Summerwhite varieties represent about 20 percent of the peaches and nectarines packed in California.

### The basics: Selection, storage and handling

When stone fruits are purchased in the grocery store, they often feel hard to the touch and are not fully ripe. The best way to ripen stone fruit is to place it in a paper bag, fold the top of the bag over loosely, and place the bag on the counter for one to three days. Never store hard fruit in the refrigerator, in plastic bags, or in direct sunlight.

Check the fruit daily. When it's ripe, it will be aromatic and will give slightly to gentle pressure. Once ripened, it can be stored in the refrigerator for about a week.

Peaches, plums and nectarines are easy to prepare: simply rinse under cool water and they're ready to

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go. Unless a recipe calls for it, you never need to peel any of these fruits: in fact, many of the antioxidants found in stone fruits are contained in the peel, and it's highly recommended that the peel be consumed along with the flesh.

For more information, please visit the California Tree Fruit Agreement's consumer Web site at

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### **Thirsting For Summer? Stay Hydrated To Enjoy Hot Summer Days**

#### **By News Canada**

(NC)—After a long, cold winter, Canadians can't wait for summer! But often, summertime, welcome as it is, can bring sweltering heat and unbearable humidity, which can lead to dehydration.

Canadians need to be prepared for hot summer days. The most important thing to remember is to drink plenty of fluids to keep the body hydrated.

"For some people, drinking eight or ten glasses of water a day is hard to do. I encourage people who have difficulty drinking so much water to supplement their water intake with other fluids they enjoy drinking, like juices and lemonade – focusing on beverages without caffeine or alcohol," says Sandra Edwards, Registered Dietitian and Sports Nutritionist.

Canadians, it seems, understand the importance of hydration because beverage sales peak during the dog days of summer.

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"Our Aquafina bottled water sales are never better than they are on hot summer days," says Michael Hartman, Vice President of Marketing, Pepsi-Cola Canada Ltd. "Iced tea is also a big hit, and so is lemonade. When it gets really hot out, there's nothing quite like a tall, cool glass of Brisk Lemonade to quench your thirst."

When the body sweats, it not only loses vital moisture but essential minerals too, including potassium, a mineral found in abundance in fruits and vegetables. Eating healthy snacks replenishes minerals and helps absorb and retain fluids. So, remember to stock up on fresh summer fruits and veggies to stay hydrated and refreshed.

Even at work, you can dry out in the summertime. Just because air-conditioned environments keep you cool, doesn't mean you're safe from dehydration. Climate-controlled buildings can zap body's vital moisture. So sip on refreshing drinks, like water, iced-teas or lemonade all work-day long.

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