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Goji berries have a significant placebo effect

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Goji berries will not have any positive effect on people that do not follow a balanced diet, according to a University of Granada professor specialist in nutrition.

The species Lycium Barbarum is currently imported from China and comes from the Mediterranean regions and grows in other mild regions of the world.

While the consumption of Goji berries has risen dramatically over the last months, their properties have not been scientifically proven yet by any relevant clinical intervention study with humans. Most of Goji berries' components are contained in the recommended fruit and vegetable intake in balanced diets.

The only difference is the "significant placebo effect" on people consuming them. Also, the species Lycium Barbarum belongs to the Solanaceae family, the same family to which potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, aubergines and other vegetables included in the Mediterranean diet belong.

Such is the explanation given by Professor Emilio Martínez de Victoria Munoz at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of the University of Granada. He also remarks that the supposed scientific studies endorsing the beneficial properties of Goji berries "were exclusively developed in vitro and in animals in China, but few have been conducted in humans out of China", although "the effects are likely to be the same".

Goji berries contain numerous nutrients. This fruit contain antioxidants, complex polysaccharides (proteoglycan, which are considered to be the source of its beneficial effects on health) and monosaccharides, lutein and zeaxanthin (beneficial for the eyes), fiber, proteins and carbohydrates.

Thus, "these berries can not have any damaging or neutral effect on human health", the University of Granada professor stated. Caution must be taken with potential allergic reactions, and patients taking anticoagulant drugs should avoid the intake of this fruit.

However, "the consumption of these berries is but another fad" Martínez de Victoria warned, remarking that "Goji berries will not have any positive effect on people who do not follow a balanced diet".

Anyway, anyone buying this product should pay attention to the label "to avoid adulterations, which are widely spread in the market". Berries must belong to the Lycium Barbarum or Lycium Chinense species, "which are the ones that contain the nutrients and healthy effects claimed".

The benefits have been published in the journal *Planta Medica (Medicinal Plant)*.

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