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# Nopal cactus (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) as a source of bioactive compounds for nutrition, health and disease

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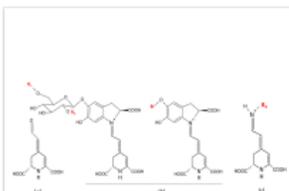
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## Abstract

*Opuntia ficus-indica*, commonly referred to as prickly pear or nopal cactus, is a dicotyledonous angiosperm plant. It belongs to the Cactaceae family and is characterized by its remarkable adaptation to arid and semi-arid climates in tropical and subtropical regions of the globe. In the last decade, compelling evidence for the nutritional and health benefit potential of this cactus has been provided by academic scientists and private companies. Notably, its rich composition in polyphenols, vitamins, polyunsaturated fatty acids and amino acids has been highlighted through the use of a large panel of extraction methods. The identified natural cactus compounds and derivatives were shown to be endowed with biologically relevant activities including anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, hypoglycemic, antimicrobial and neuroprotective properties. The present review is aimed at stressing the major classes of cactus components and their medical interest through emphasis on some of their biological effects, particularly those having the most promising expected health benefit and therapeutic impacts.

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## Figures



**Figure 1** General structure of betalamic acid...

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