

Chia seeds

Ready for a healthy surprise? The seeds famously celebrated in the 'ch-ch-chia' pets TV commercial pack a huge nutritional punch. Chia seeds – particularly the Salba variety - are high in iron, folate, calcium, magnesium, omega-3 fatty acids and soluble fibre. "Iron and folate are both essential nutrients needed for health," says Remmer. The calcium and magnesium promote bone and dental health, while the omega-3s help your heart by lowering triglycerides – the bad fats in your blood that can cause coronary artery disease. "The soluble fibre helps decrease cholesterol, stabilizes blood sugar levels and helps you feel fuller longer," says Remmer.

How to use them: Never eat the seeds that come with a chia pet. Instead, purchase fresh seeds from a health food store. "Simply add them to a smoothie, yogurt, cereal, muffin recipes or sprinkle on a salad. Chia seeds are also gluten free,"

Serving Size = 1 Tsp

Consider these facts about Chia seeds:
- 2.5 times more protein than kidney beans
- 3 times the antioxidant strength of blueberries
- 3 times more iron than spinach
- 6 times more calcium than milk
- 7 times more vitamin C than oranges
- 8 times more omega-3 than salmon
- 10 times more fiber than rice
- 15 times more magnesium than broccoli

Hemp seeds

"Hemp seeds are very nutritious and a great source of complete protein," says Remmer. "They have lots of fibre that helps with gastrointestinal and heart health." Hemp seeds promote healthy hair and skin growth thanks to their omega-3 and 6 fatty acid content. Omega-3s also reduce inflammation and boost brain and cardiovascular health. Plus, hemp seeds contain phytosterols, plant-based compounds that help lower cholesterol levels. But don't be worried about hemp's relation to marijuana. While they're both members of the cannabis family, hemp doesn't contain THC, marijuana's active ingredient, so you can't become high from consuming hemp seeds.

How to use them: Remmer says that hemp seeds and their oil are both rich in heart healthy polyunsaturated fats. Use them in salads and smoothies. The seeds are also ideal for baked goods, shakes, yogurt and cereal.

Serving Size = 1 Tbsp

Hemp contains:
- All 20 amino acids, including the 9 essential amino acids (EAAs) our bodies cannot produce.
- A high protein percentage of the simple proteins that strengthen immunity and fend off toxins.
- Eating hemp seeds in any form could aid, if not heal, people suffering from immune deficiency diseases. This conclusion is supported by the fact that hemp seed has been used to treat nutritional deficiencies brought on by tuberculosis, a severe nutrition blocking disease that causes the body to waste away.
- Nature's highest botanical source of essential fatty acid, with more essential fatty acid than flax or any other nut or seed oil.
- A perfect 3:1 ratio of Omega-6 Linoleic Acid and Omega-3 Linolenic Acid – for cardiovascular health and general strengthening of the immune system.
- A superior vegetarian source of protein considered easily digestible.
- A rich source of phytonutrients, the disease-protective element of plants with benefits protecting your immunity, bloodstream, tissues, cells, skin, organs and mitochondria.
- The richest known source of polyunsaturated essential fatty acids.

Pumpkin seeds

Pumpkin seeds, also known as Pepitas, are a tasty source of B vitamins, iron, magnesium, zinc and protein. "The protein in pumpkin seeds is highly concentrated in an amino acid called Tryptophan, which helps lower anxiety levels. For this reason, they have been used to treat some anxiety disorders," says Remmer. Pumpkin seeds also have high levels of essential fatty acids that help keep our blood vessels healthy and lower bad cholesterol.

How to use them: Raw or roasted pumpkin seeds make a healthy snack, or you can use them in baking, cooking, as a soup garnish, and in homemade trail mix or granola. Pumpkin seed oil makes a healthy addition to salad dressings, and dips, however, it's unadvisable to cook with pumpkin seed oil as heat can destroy its nutritional properties.

Serving Size = 1/2 Cup

They are the only seed that is alkaline-forming in this world of highly acidic diets.

Add pumpkin seeds to your list of foods rich in protein. 100 grams of seeds on a daily basis provide 54 percent of the daily requirement in terms of protein.

Most of us pop pills to replenish deficiency of vitamin B-complex, try pumpkin seeds next time. Pumpkin seeds are a good source for vitamin B like thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, vitamin B-6 and folates.

For those who are down in the dumps, pumpkin seeds can help fight through depression. The chemical component L-tryptophan is the secret ingredient to boost your mood.

Did you know that pumpkin seeds can prevent kidney stones? Studies suggest that pumpkin seeds can help prevent certain kidney stone formations like calcium oxalate kidney stone.

Pumpkin seeds even hold the secret to fighting parasites, especially tapeworms.

POMEGRANATE SEEDS

Serving Size = 1/2 Cup

Pomegranates are a rich source of antioxidants. Therefore, it helps to protect your body's cells from free radicals, which cause premature aging. In simple words, pomegranate juice pumps the level of oxygen in your blood. The antioxidants fight free radicals and prevents blood clots. This eventually helps the blood to flow freely in your body in turn improving the oxygen levels in your blood.

Pomegranates are especially high in polyphenols, a form of antioxidant purported to help reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease. In fact, pomegranate juice, which contains health-boosting tannins, anthocyanins, and ellagic acid, has higher antioxidant activity than green tea and red wine.

The pomegranate, with its edible seeds inside juicy sacs, is high in vitamin C and potassium, low in calories (80 per serving, which is just under one-third of a medium fruit), and a good source of fibre.

The antioxidant properties of a pomegranate prevent low-density lipoprotein cholesterol from oxidizing. This essentially means that pomegranates prevent the hardening of the artery walls with excess fat, leaving your arteries fat free and pumping with antioxidants.

Sunflower seeds

"Sunflower seeds are an excellent source of B vitamins including folate, which helps to support healthy pregnancy and promotes a healthy immune system," says Remmer. "They're also an excellent source of Vitamin E - an antioxidant that protects your cells from damage, helps maintain healthy hair and skin, and may help to prevent cancer." These multitasking seeds are also rich in protein and heart-healthy fats.

How to use them: "Sunflower seeds can be eaten by themselves, or in cookie or muffin recipes. Add them to salads, stir-fries and trail mix," says Remmer. But beware of salted sunflower seeds. The sodium levels in pre-salted seeds are quite high and excessive salt lowers the seeds' nutritional value.

Serving Size = 1/4 Cup

Sunflower seeds are an excellent source of vitamin E, the body's primary fat-soluble antioxidant. Vitamin E travels throughout the body neutralizing free radicals that would otherwise damage fat-containing structures and molecules, such as cell membranes, brain cells, and cholesterol.

Sesame seeds have some of the highest total phytosterol content of seeds. Phytosterols are compounds found in plants that have a chemical structure very similar to cholesterol, and when present in the diet in sufficient amounts, are believed to reduce blood levels of cholesterol, enhance the immune response and decrease risk of certain cancers.

Sunflower seeds are a good source of magnesium. Numerous studies have demonstrated that magnesium helps reduce the severity of asthma, lower high blood pressure, and prevent migraine headaches, as well as reducing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Flax seeds

"Flax seeds are bursting with nutritional benefits," says Remmer. A great source of soluble fibre, flax helps lower cholesterol, makes you feel fuller longer and aids in stabilizing blood sugar levels. Flax seeds are also packed with omega-3 fatty acid, so they're beneficial to eye and brain health, and can help lower triglycerides in the blood. "Flaxseeds are also high in lignans (plant-based phytoestrogens)," says Remmer. Studies have shown that lignans may help prevent certain cancers.

How to use them: Flax seed shells are hard, so it's important to grind the seeds in a blender or coffee grinder before eating them. If you don't, the seeds can pass through your body undigested, hindering the absorption of the seeds' valuable omega-3 content. Coarse or finely ground flax seeds can be added to smoothies, shakes, yogurt, oatmeal, cereal, casseroles and baking. Ground flax seed should be kept in an airtight container in your refrigerator.

Serving Size = 1-2 Tsp (ground)

Dietary fiber from flaxseed suppresses rises in blood levels of lipids after a meal and modulate appetite.

University of Copenhagen researchers report that flax fiber suppresses appetite and helps support weight loss.

Flax has been cultivated for centuries and has been celebrated for its usefulness all over the world. Hippocrates wrote about using flax for the relief of abdominal pains, and the French Emperor Charlemagne favored flax seed so much that he passed laws requiring its consumption!

The main health benefits of flax seed are due to its rich content of Alpha-Linolenic Acid (ALA), dietary fiber, and lignans.

The essential fatty acid ALA is a powerful anti-inflammatory, decreasing the production of agents that promote inflammation and lowering blood levels of C-Reactive Protein (CRP), a biomarker of inflammation. Through the actions of the ALA and lignans, flax has been shown to block tumor growth in animals and may help reduce cancer risk in humans.

Lignans are phytoestrogens, plant compounds that have estrogen-like effects and antioxidant properties. Phytoestrogens help to stabilize hormonal levels, reducing the symptoms of PMS and menopause, and potentially reducing the risk of developing breast and prostate cancer.

The fiber in flax seed promotes healthy bowel function. One tablespoon of whole flax seed contains as much fiber as half a cup of cooked oat bran. Flax's soluble fibers can lower blood cholesterol levels, helping reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Ground flax seed provides more nutritional benefits than does the whole seed. Grind the seeds at home using a coffee grinder or blender, and add them to cereals, baked goods and smoothies.

Wheat germ

Remmer says that wheat germ is the nutritional powerhouse of the wheat kernel. It's loaded with protein, iron and B vitamins such as folate, plus its high fibre content helps prevent constipation and keeps your appetite in check. "It's very low on the glycemic index meaning that it doesn't cause a blood-sugar spike. [You stay] fuller longer," says Remmer.

How to use it: Wheat germ makes a great addition to smoothies, hot cereals, baking and cooking recipes. Be sure to store raw wheat germ properly. Its healthy polyunsaturated fats can quickly turn rancid. Remmer recommends keeping wheat germ in a tightly sealed container in the freezer for optimum freshness.

SESAME SEEDS

Serving Size = 1/4 Cup

Sesame seeds may be the oldest seed conditionally resistant to rancidity.

Not only are sesame seeds a good source of manganese and copper, but they are also a very good source of calcium, magnesium, iron, phosphorus, vitamin B1, zinc and dietary fiber. In addition to these important nutrients, sesame seeds contain two unique substances: sesamin and sesamol. Both of these substances belong to a group of essential beneficial fibers called lignans, and have been shown to have a cholesterol-lowering effect in humans, and to prevent high blood pressure and increase vitamin E supplies in animals. Sesamin has also been found to protect the liver from oxidative damage.