Seeds as superfood

BIG BENEFITS IN SMALL PACKAGES

Timothy Hennessy, RHN, RNCP

A seed is a genetic miracle. Each tiny embryo contains a complete DNA blueprint to replicate its parent plant. Though small in size, seeds are one of the most nutrient-rich foods on the planet. Here’s why we should include them in our diet.

Seeds such as flax, sunflower, pumpkin, and sesame contain good amounts of essential fatty acids, as well as B vitamins and the minerals copper, magnesium, and manganese.

“Seeds are an excellent source of protein.”
EATING WELL

Sunflower seeds contribute more than 75 percent of our daily requirement of vitamin E.

Flaxseeds are an excellent source of dietary fibre.

**SUNFLOWER SEEDS** are healthy, with 1/4 cup (60 mL) raw, unsalted sunflower seeds contributing more than 75 percent of our daily requirement of vitamin E.

Because this nutrient requires fats to transport it in our bodies, when we consume this valuable antioxidant as a component of the oils that naturally occur in sunflower seeds, the nutrient becomes readily available to us.

**FLAXSEEDS** are unique among the oil-rich seeds because they contain high amounts of linolenic acid, an unsaturated omega-3 fatty acid that the body converts to the essential fatty acids, DHA and EPA. These are similar to healthy long-chain fatty acids found in cold-water fish such as sardines and salmon.

Flaxseeds are also an excellent source of dietary fibre and add a lovely nutty flavour when ground up and added to dishes. Try them on oatmeal.

**SESAME SEEDS** come in a variety of colours from white to black and are extremely oil-rich. They are the base of tahini, a paste from the Middle East that is used to make the delicious chickpea spread, hummus. Sesame oil is usually made from toasted seeds and is a very stable cooking fat that resists oxidation and rancidity.

**PUMPKIN SEEDS** are rich in chlorophyll and protein. Grind them up when raw and use to thicken soups and sauces, or toast...
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them lightly as a snack. You could also sprinkle some on top of muffins when baking.

Seeds are an excellent source of protein and should be consumed in small amounts to allow our bodies to assimilate them efficiently.

To improve their digestibility, try soaking them overnight. This initiates the sprouting process, an enzymatic reaction that helps to break down the fats and proteins contained within the seed. Further, sprouting seeds significantly increases their vitamin B content. Even vitamin C (not present in most seeds) is found in good amounts after sprouting.

Seeds can be dried after soaking and eaten raw, or they can be lightly toasted to enhance their flavours. They make a great garnish for soups and work well as a salad ingredient. For a tasty snack, try toasting them and then sprinkling lightly with sea salt or a splash of tamari sauce. Yum! a

Choose raw organic seeds to avoid the pesticides sprayed on commercial crops. Store seeds in the fridge so their oils do not spoil.

Timothy Hennessey, RHN, RNCP, is a chef, nutritionist, and a regular contributor to alive magazine.

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