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8 Impressive Health Benefits of Pumpkin



Pumpkin bread, pumpkin ravioli, pumpkin pie, pumpkin risotto, pumpkin beer — the options are endless, and endlessly mouthwatering. It's finally pumpkin season, and the reasons to celebrate are many.

Not only is fall's signature squash versatile enough to fit into all the above and more, it also packs some powerful healthy perks — like keeping heart health, vision and waistlines in check, as long as you take it easy on the pie, that is.

Below, we've rounded up some of our favorite health benefits of pumpkin. Let us know what else you love about pumpkins in the comments!

Pumpkins Keep Eyesight Sharp

A cup of cooked, mashed pumpkin contains more than 200 percent of your recommended daily intake of vitamin A, which aids vision, particularly in dim light, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Pumpkins are also rich in carotenoids, the compounds

that give the gourd their bright orange color, including beta-carotene, which the body converts into a form of vitamin A for additional peeper protection.

Pumpkins Aid Weight Loss

Pumpkin is an often-overlooked source of fiber, but with three grams per one-cup serving and only 49 calories, it can keep you feeling full for longer on fewer calories.

A fiber-rich diet seems to help people eat less, and thereby shed pounds. A 2009 study found that people who ate a whole apple before lunch (the fiber is in the skin) consumed fewer calories throughout the meal than people who ate applesauce or drank apple juice, [WebMD reported](#).

Pumpkin Seeds Can Help Your Heart

Nuts and seeds, including those of pumpkins, are naturally rich in certain plant-based chemicals called phytosterols that have been shown in studies to reduce LDL or "bad" cholesterol.

Pumpkins May Reduce Cancer

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AT THE
JUICE BAR**

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[NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with Simple Again's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.]

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Pumpkins May Reduce Cancer Risk

Like their orange comrades the sweet potato, the carrot and the butternut squash (to name a few), pumpkins boast the antioxidant beta-carotene, which may play a role in cancer prevention, according to the National Cancer

Institute.

Food sources of beta-carotene seem to help more than a supplement, according to the NIH — even more reason to scoop up some pumpkin today. And the plant sterols in pumpkin seeds have also been linked to fighting off certain cancers.

Pumpkins Protect The Skin

The same free-radical-neutralizing powers of the carotenoids in pumpkin that may keep cancer cells at bay can also help keep the skin wrinkle-free, Health magazine reported.

Pumpkin Seeds Can Boost Your Mood

Pumpkin seeds are rich in the amino acid tryptophan, the famed ingredient in turkey that many think brings on the need for that post-Thanksgiving feast snooze. While experts agree that it's likely the overeating rather than the tryptophan lulling you to sleep, the amino acid is important in production of serotonin, one of the major players when it comes to our mood, WebMD reports. A handful of roasted pumpkin seeds may help your outlook stay bright.

Pumpkins Can Help After A Hard Workout

Ever heard of bananas being touted as nature's energy bar? Turns out, a cup of cooked pumpkin has more of the refueling nutrient potassium, with 564 milligrams to a banana's 422.

A little extra potassium helps restore the body's balance of electrolytes after a heavy workout and keeps muscles functioning at their best.

Pumpkins Can Boost Your Immune System

Well, maybe. Whether or not vitamin C can really ward off colds is still up for debate, but pumpkins are a solid source of the essential nutrient. One cup of cooked pumpkin contains more than 11 milligrams, or nearly 20 percent of the 60 milligrams the IOM recommends women need daily. (Men should aim for around 75 milligrams.)

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