

Flax Seeds

Quick Tips: Flaxseed – mix ground flaxseed in with oatmeal, smoothies, homemade salad dressings, or just sprinkle it on top of your meals.

Flax seeds, known as one of the richest sources of essential omega-3 fatty acids and having around one hundred times more cancer-fighting lignans than other foods, have also been demonstrated to prove helpful against breast and prostate cancers; controlling cholesterol, triglyceride, and blood sugar levels; reducing inflammation; and successfully treating constipation.

You can imagine how my skeptic red flag was raised by a review published in a medical journal titled “Flaxseed: A Miraculous Defense Against Some Critical Maladies.” “Miraculous”? Really? Well, a remarkable intervention trial published in the journal *Hypertension* suggests that, in this case, the term “miraculous” may not be too far off.



Researchers designed a prospective, double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized trial so they could randomize subjects into two groups and secretly introduce tablespoons of ground flax seeds every day into the diets of half the participants to see if it made any difference. After six months, those who ate the placebo foods started out hypertensive and stayed hypertensive, despite the fact that many of them were on a variety of blood pressure pills. What about the hypertensives who were unknowingly eating flax seeds every day? Their blood pressure dropped from 158/82 down to 143/75. A seven-point drop in diastolic blood pressure may not sound like a lot, but that would be expected to result in 46 percent fewer strokes and 29 percent less heart disease over time.

How does that result compare with taking drugs? The flax seeds managed to drop subjects' systolic and diastolic blood pressure by up to fifteen and seven points, respectively. Compare that result to the effect of powerful antihypertensive drugs, such as calcium-channel blockers (for example, Norvasc, Cardizem, Procardia), which have been found to reduce blood pressure by only eight and three points, respectively, or to ACE inhibitors (such as Vasotec, Lotensin, Zestril, Altace), which drop patients' blood pressure by only five and two points, respectively. Ground flaxseed may work two to three times better than these medicines, and they have only good side effects.

“Miraculous”? Well, certainly super healthy, which is why a tablespoon of ground flaxseed every day gets its own spot on the Daily Dozen checklist I created to help inspire you to incorporate some of the healthiest foods into your daily routine.

Image Credit: Magone / Thinkstock. This image has been modified.

Source: NutritionFacts.org | Dr. Greger's Daily Dozen Digest