

These are the 6 healthiest seeds: Contemplate for a moment, the power of a seed. This tiny unassuming entity has the power to bloom into robust forests, teeming in biodiversity to maintain homeostasis. They also help to maintain optimal dietary homeostasis. Six in particular are the true powerhouses in the body. Learn more about these six key seeds to incorporate into your diet for healthy cholesterol levels (sunflower, sesame), omega-3 balance (chia, flax), protein source (hemp), and prostate support (pumpkin seeds)!

We All Know Seeds Are Good for You, but These 6 Are the Healthiest

Anya Sacharow, 8/7/2021



"Convince me you have a seed there," Henry David Thoreau wrote, "and I am prepared to expect wonders." The famous naturalist of Walden Pond was referring to the power of a seed to build a forest. Little did he know that his thoughts apply to the power seeds have to nourish us humans, too. They are, without question, one of the best-for-you superfoods that really do live up to the hype.

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Inside a seed's hard coating is an entire embryonic plant, surrounded by all the food that it needs to thrive once it gets dispersed into the soil. Incorporate seeds into your diet, not occasionally but

consistently, and you'll reap the benefits of all those nutrients, making seeds well worth the addition. The types of seeds here are among the healthiest, and most will stay fresh for up to a year when stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Consider them worthy alternatives to the nuts that are commonly enjoyed. (Nuts, in fact, are shelled fruits that contain seeds.) All of these seeds below contain omega-3 fatty acids, which are associated with everything from a healthy brain and heart to supple skin. Each also boasts its own distinctive dietary offerings, along with unique flavors that transform everyday eats into food that feel both special and packed with nutrients.

Chia Seeds

Nutrition Facts

- **Calories per serving:** 70 in a tablespoon (dry).
- **Notable nutrients:** Fiber and calcium.

Chia Seed Benefits

Digestive maintenance: One tablespoon has more fiber than a slice of whole-grain bread. This roughage enhances digestion and also makes you feel fuller, says New York City nutritionist Lauren Slayton.

Heart health: The fiber, protein, and omega-3 fatty acids housed in chia seeds all may help reduce the risk of heart disease. A 2014 study also showed a link between chia seeds and reduced blood pressure in people with hypertension.

Better bones: Don't like dairy? Two servings offer the same amount of calcium as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk.

Try them as pudding: Go for our vanilla-cinnamon chia pudding recipe and top it off with granola and fruit if you want a crunchier or sweeter touch. © Provided by Real Simple healthiest seeds: chia seeds



Sunflower Seeds

Nutrition Facts

- **Calories per serving:** 204 in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup.
- **Notable nutrients:** Vitamin E and selenium.

Sunflower Seed Benefits

Antioxidant boost: One serving provides almost a full daily dose of vitamin E, which helps to keep brain cells healthy and cholesterol at bay. In a 2014 study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Alzheimer's patients who consumed vitamin E daily experienced functional decline more slowly than those who abstained.



Cancer protection: One serving offers 34 percent of the daily recommended value of selenium, a mineral linked to the repair of DNA.

Try them with spices: Mix ½ cup of these sweet, buttery seeds with a pinch each of salt, cumin, chili powder, and cinnamon. Dry-roast in a pan over medium heat for 4 to 5 minutes. Toss over guacamole, tacos, or salads.

© Provided by Real Simple Sunflower seeds

Flaxseeds

Nutrition Facts

- **Calories per serving:** 75 in 2 tablespoons (ground).
- **Notable nutrients:** Fiber and alpha linoleic acid (ALA).

Flaxseed Benefits

Diabetes prevention: A 2011 study in *Nutrition Journal* reported that prediabetic subjects who daily ate flaxseed (which is rich in sugar-regulating fiber) raised their insulin sensitivity slightly after 12 weeks. And a 2012 paper in *Nutrition & Metabolism* suggested that flaxseed may be better at lowering LDL cholesterol (yep, the bad kind) when it's stirred into viscous foods, like yogurt, rather than sprinkled onto solids.

Omega-3 boost: One ounce has more than twice the omega-3s (in the form of ALA) in 4 ounces of salmon.

Try them on oatmeal: Sprinkle ground flaxseed (it comes packaged this way) onto oatmeal with honey. And make sure to have flaxseed with orange juice; vitamin C helps ALA omega-3s to more directly benefit the heart and the brain.

© Provided by Real Simple Flaxseeds in spoon

Hempseeds

Nutrition Facts

- **Calories per serving:** 90 in 2 tablespoons.
- **Notable nutrients:** Gamma linoleic acid (GLA) and protein.

Hempseed Benefits

Inflammation relief: Hemp (which isn't hallucinogenic) is an unusual food source of GLA, an anti-inflammatory. This may explain why it's linked to skin and joint health, says Cathy Deimeke, a registered dietitian at the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix.



Protein power: Hemp is also a rare vegan source of all eight essential amino acids (the protein building blocks that the body can't make). A 2013 study of rats published in the *European Journal of Nutrition* suggested that hemp protein helps to reduce hypertension.

Try them in pesto: Hemp seeds taste like potent pine nuts, so they're great in a superfood pesto. Puree a handful of the seeds with garlic, grated Parmesan, extra-virgin olive oil, fresh basil, and arugula in a food processor.

© Provided by Real Simple Healthiest seeds: hemp seeds

Pumpkin Seeds

Nutrition Facts

- **Calories per serving:** 180 in ¼ cup.
- **Notable nutrients:** Protein and zinc.

Pumpkin Seed Benefits

Immunity boost: These seeds are a valuable source of zinc, a nutrient that helps to keep immune cells functioning properly. One ounce of pumpkin seeds provides about 20 percent of the daily recommended value of zinc. Only a handful of other foods (such as beef and pork) offer the same.

Muscle tone: One serving offers almost 10 grams of protein, nearly 20 percent of the daily recommended dose for women—which is remarkable for a vegan source. That's slightly more than ½ cup of black beans.

Try them on toast: Cover a slice of toast with mashed avocado, then add a sprinkling of sea salt and the seeds. Don't toast the seeds, which reduces their nutritional content. If you'd rather munch on them plain, try our spiced pumpkin seed recipe.

© Provided by Real Simple Healthiest seeds: pumpkin seeds

Sesame Seeds

Nutrition Facts

- **Calories per serving:** 103 in 2 tablespoons.
- **Notable nutrients:** Phytosterol and iron.

Cholesterol control: Sesame seeds are rich in phytosterol, which "sticks to cholesterol like a fly to flypaper," says Rebecca Scritchfield, a registered dietitian in Washington, D.C. Some studies looking into the connection between sesame seeds and cholesterol have found that daily consumption of sesame seeds had positive effects on lipid levels, LHL cholesterol, and total cholesterol levels.



Healthy tissues: Just ¼ cup has five times more iron (which delivers oxygen to cells) than 1 cup of raw spinach.

Try them on salmon: Marinate fish in a soy-honey sauce, then coat with the seeds. Bake or fry in a nonstick pan until the seeds form a crispy crust (which intensifies their nutty flavor).

© Provided by Real Simple Healthiest seeds: sesame seeds



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