

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

- **Desmond Tutu**

I thought this quote was particularly important this month given all the darkness we're seeing right now. Hurricane Helene devastated several regions of our beautiful country and way too many people lost everything, including lives of loved ones. Hurricane Milton just hit our fellow citizens in western Florida and thank goodness it lost intensity prior to coming ashore. The current disaster no one seems to be talking about is the 74,000 acres currently burning in eastern Wyoming. There's so much darkness and evil in front of us right now, it probably seems as if there is no light at the end of these horrible tunnels. But that's where hope enters the picture. Our world is definitely getting darker by the hour, with one disaster or tragedy after another hitting people worldwide. The one thing that gives me hope is that I truly believe God is in control and he's done playing around. He is the only one who can save us from this darkness. However, hope can truly be a powerful force and it's what can keep you going when you feel as if you can't go on. We've all seen that the world is full of peril and there are many dark places, but never forget that there must be darkness in order to see the stars. We must always be able to go forward with hope and not let fear, distrust, doubt or division push us back.

Yours in health,

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Health Benefits of Pumpkin Seeds



Now that it's October, pumpkin season has begun, and whether you're buying one to carve or buying one to bake a fresh pumpkin pie, you're probably not thinking much about what you're likely throwing away....the seeds. So I figured it was a good time to let you know about all the benefits they provide. As I continue with my *“food as medicine”* focus, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised by what you learn this month. Most people don't know that pumpkin seeds (also known as pepitas) are loaded with a plethora of nutrients, which provide a number of benefits. Here are just a few:

- **Provide Protein.** Pumpkin seeds have a surprising amount of protein, providing 11 grams in just ¼ cup. So for those of you who don't like to eat meat, they're a fantastic source of “plant-based” protein. The amount of protein each person needs is different, so be sure to calculate your own personal daily needs. If you need some help, please reach out to me.
- **Provide Fiber.** As most of you know, eating fiber helps to keep you feel full longer, which can reduce your desire to snack between meals and help you lose or maintain your weight. Fiber also helps to regulate your body's level of cholesterol. Pumpkin seeds provide 2 grams of fiber. The average daily recommended amount to consume is 25 grams for women and 38 grams for men.
- **Provide Healthy Fat.** A ¼-cup of pumpkin seeds provides about 13 grams of fat. This includes around 7 grams of polyunsaturated and 5 grams of monounsaturated fats. Healthy fats are important to help lower LDL cholesterol (the bad one) and increase HDL cholesterol (the good one), which provides a win-win. This can help reduce the buildup of dangerous plaque that can form in the arteries, which can then lower the risk of ultimately developing cardiovascular issues.
- **Provide Magnesium.** Again, just ¼-cup of pumpkin seeds provides about 190 mg of magnesium. This is a mineral that's important for maintaining heart health, regulating levels of blood sugar, helping with sleep and improving overall mood. I was pretty surprised to learn that magnesium is needed for more than 600 chemical reactions in the body. My research has shown that magnesium can also help build your immune system, particularly in conjunction with the other supplements I listed in my August 2020 and November 2021 newsletters. It can also help control blood pressure, which in turn, reduces the risk of heart disease.
- **Provide Antioxidants.** As I've written many times before, antioxidants help reduce inflammation, which is a major cause of most disease. Pumpkin seeds and even pumpkin seed oil, provide a high level of antioxidants. This also helps protect cells from the dangerous free radicals that are often running rampant throughout the body.

- **Provide Potassium and Other Minerals.** Potassium is important for maintaining the body's electrolyte balance and just ¼-cup provides 243 mg of this nutrient. Pumpkin seeds also contain Vitamin K, manganese, calcium, zinc, selenium, iron and copper. Each of these minerals provides its own special benefit to overall health. I will say this about iron. It plays an important role in carrying oxygen through our body. Disease can't live in an oxygen-rich environment, A ¼-cup serving provides 4 mg of iron, which helps women reach the goal of 18 mg per day and men reach the recommended 8 mg per day.
- **Protect Against Prostate and Breast Cancers.** Eating pumpkin seeds may reduce the risk of breast cancer in women who have gone through menopause. This is super important information since one of my closest friends is being treated conventionally for this horrible disease. Additionally, there are some older studies that suggest the lignans found in the seeds may help in both preventing and treating breast cancer. There are a number of more current studies that show pumpkin seeds and pumpkin seed oil may decrease the growth of prostate cancer cells as well as help treat the symptoms of an overactive bladder. The reason for this is because the seeds contain phytosterols, a compound known for its ability to help shrink the prostate.

I personally buy organic, raw and unsalted pumpkin seeds, but you can make your own from a fresh pumpkin by roasting them as follows:

1. Place the seeds in a fine mesh strainer and rinse them under running water.
2. Make sure to remove all the pulp
3. Lay rinsed seeds on a dry towel and pat them dry. The drier they are, the crispier they'll become. For faster drying, arrange them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper (NOT aluminum foil) and place in a 300 degree oven for 5 minutes
4. Transfer dried seeds to a bowl and toss with olive oil and some type of seasoning such as cumin, paprika or chili powder, depending on your taste and preference
5. Place coated seeds back on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. They should be in a single layer
6. Roast at 350 for 12-15 minutes.
7. Take out of the oven and give them a stir to make sure they roast evenly
8. Return to the oven and back for another 8-10 minutes until the color has changed and they become fragrant. Don't let them get too brown
9. Remove from oven and let them cool. They'll get crispier as they cool
10. Enjoy!

You can store them in an airtight container for up to three days. Any longer than that and they will likely lose their crunch. I have seen some recipes that recommend storing freshly roasted pumpkin seeds in the refrigerator or freezer to give them a longer shelf life. If you decide to go the store-bought route, I only recently learned that refrigeration after opening is recommended.

Pumpkin seeds are super easy to add to your diet. Not only can you eat them on their own, like any nut you may like, but you can also sprinkle them into salads, soup or cereal. I add them to my homemade granola and morning-glory muffins.

I hope you've learned that pumpkin seeds are a wonderful addition to your daily diet but more importantly, they're a powerhouse of nutrition that provide many benefits to our health and are another great example of using food as medicine. Have a wonderful month!