

Pumpkin Seeds for Prostate Health and More

10 Health Benefits of Pumpkin Seeds:

1. Prostate Protection

They promote overall prostate health and alleviate the difficult urination associated with an enlarged prostate.

2. Improved Bladder Function

In some studies, pumpkin seed extracts improved bladder function in animals.

3. Depression Treatment

They contain L-tryptophan, a compound naturally effective against depression.

4. Prevention of Osteoporosis

Because they are high in zinc, pumpkin seeds are a natural protector against osteoporosis. Low intake of zinc is linked to higher rates of osteoporosis.

5. Natural Anti-Inflammatory

Pumpkin seeds effectively reduce inflammation without the side effects of anti-inflammatory drugs.

6. Prevention of Kidney Stones

They prevent calcium oxalate kidney stone formation, according to studies.

7. Treatment of Parasites

They are used in many cultures as a natural treatment for tapeworms and other parasites. Studies also show them to be effective against acute schistosomiasis, a parasite contracted from snails.

8. Great Source of Magnesium

1/2 cup of pumpkin seeds contains 92% of your daily value of magnesium, a mineral in which most Americans are deficient.

9. Lower Cholesterol

Pumpkin seeds contain phytosterols, compounds that have been shown to reduce levels of LDL cholesterol.

10. Cancer Prevention

The same phytosterols that lower cholesterol also protect against many cancers.

Pumpkin Seeds May Promote Prostate Health

Benign prostatic hypertrophy, or BPH, is a condition that commonly affects men 50 years and older in the United States. BPH involves enlargement of the prostate gland. One of the factors that contributes to BPH is overstimulation of the prostate cells by testosterone and its conversion product, DHT (dihydrotestosterone).

Components in pumpkin seed oil appear able to interrupt this triggering of prostate cell multiplication by testosterone and DHT, although the exact mechanism for this effect is still a matter of discussion. Equally open for discussion is the relationship between pumpkin seed oil extracts (which could be purchased in the form of a dietary supplement) and pumpkin seeds themselves. The prostate-helpful components found in the oil extracts are definitely found in the seeds; the only question is whether the amount of seeds eaten for a normal snack would contain enough of these prostate-supportive components. The carotenoids found in pumpkin seeds, and the omega-3 fats found in pumpkin seeds are also being studied for their potential prostate benefits. Men with higher amounts of carotenoids in their diet have less risk for BPH; this is the connection that has led to an interest in pumpkin seed carotenoids.

Zinc is one further nutrient found in pumpkin seeds that might impact prostate function. The fact that pumpkin seeds serve as a good source of [zinc](#) may contribute to the role of pumpkin seeds in support of the prostate. However, studies about the relationship between zinc and BPH show mixed results, and more research is needed to determine the circumstances under which zinc might be helpful versus harmful.

Protection for Men's Bones

In addition to maintaining prostate health, another reason for older men to make zinc-rich foods, such as pumpkin seeds, a regular part of their healthy way of eating is bone mineral density. Although osteoporosis is often thought to be a disease for which postmenopausal women are at highest risk, it is also a potential problem for older men. Almost 30% of hip fractures occur in men, and 1 in 8 men over age 50 will have an osteoporotic fracture. A study of almost 400 men ranging in age from 45-92 that was published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found a clear correlation between low dietary intake of zinc, low blood levels of the trace mineral, and osteoporosis at the hip and spine.

Anti-Inflammatory Benefits in Arthritis

The healing properties of pumpkin seeds have also been recently investigated with respect to arthritis. In animal studies, the addition of pumpkin seeds to the diet has compared favorably with use of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug indomethacin in reducing inflammatory symptoms. Importantly, though, pumpkin seeds did not have one extremely unwanted effect of indomethacin: unlike the drug, pumpkin seeds do not increase the level of damaged fats (lipid peroxides) in the linings of the joints, a side-effect that actually contributes to the progression of arthritis.

A Rich Source of Healthful Minerals, Protein and Monounsaturated Fat

In addition to their above-listed unique health benefits, pumpkin seeds also provide a wide range of traditional nutrients. Our food ranking system qualified them as a very good source of the minerals [magnesium](#), [manganese](#) and phosphorus, and a good source of [iron](#), [copper](#), [protein](#), and as previously mentioned, [zinc](#). Snack on a quarter-cup of pumpkin seeds and you will receive 46.1% of the daily value for magnesium, 28.7% of the DV for iron, 52.0% of the DV for manganese, 24.0% of the DV for copper, 16.9% of the DV for protein, and 17.1% of the DV for zinc.

Pumpkin Seed Phytosterols Lower Cholesterol

Phytosterols are compounds found in plants that have a chemical structure very similar to cholesterol, and when present in the diet in sufficient amounts, are believed to reduce blood levels of cholesterol, enhance the immune response and decrease risk of certain cancers.

Phytosterols beneficial effects are so dramatic that they have been extracted from soybean, corn, and pine tree oil and added to processed foods, such as "butter"-replacement spreads, which are then touted as cholesterol-lowering "foods." But why settle for an imitation "butter" when Mother Nature's nuts and seeds are a naturally rich source of phytosterols-and cardio-protective fiber, minerals and healthy fats as well?

In a study in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, researchers published the amounts of phytosterols present in nuts and seeds commonly eaten in the United States.

Of the nuts and seeds typically consumed as snack foods, pistachios and sunflower seeds were richest in phytosterols (270-289 mg/100 g), closely followed by pumpkin seeds(265 mg/100 g). (100 grams is equivalent to 3.5 ounces.) Sesame seeds had the highest total phytosterol content (400-413 mg per 100 grams) of all nuts and seeds, while English walnuts and Brazil nuts had the lowest (113 mg/100grams and 95 mg/100 grams).

Reference websites:

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=82>

<http://www.healthdiaries.com/eatthis/10-health-benefits-of-pumpkin-seeds.html>