

Seeds are healthy sources of fiber

Michigan State University Extension and University of Arkansas Extension

Seeds and their nutritional value



Seeds are proving to be big news in the diet and nutrition arena. In addition to the fiber and heart healthy omega 3-fatty acids, many seeds are nutritional giants. Think of them as pint-sized foods with super-sized benefits.

There are many kinds of seeds. Michigan State University Extension recommends these six common seeds because of their nutritional value:

Chia seeds: Chia is a fiber heavyweight. One tablespoon serving delivers five grams of fiber. They are a good source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids and plant-based protein. The nutritional breakdown of chia seeds is: 60 calories, three grams protein, 3 grams fat, and 5 grams carbs per tablespoon)

Hemp seeds: Hemp contains the full arsenal of muscle-building essential amino acids, comparable to what you'd find in meat, eggs and dairy. One tablespoon of hemp seeds is: 57 calories, three grams protein, four grams fat and one gram of carbs.

Pumpkin seeds: Pumpkin seeds or petitas include good amounts of iron, magnesium, testosterone-boosting zinc and vitamin K. One tablespoon of pumpkin seeds is: 47 calories, two grams protein, four grams fat and 1.5 grams carbs.

Flax seeds: Flax is one of the best dietary sources of soluble fiber. By helping to slow down digestion, soluble fiber can help in the regulation of blood sugar and appetite, two benefits that can go a long way in stopping flab before it starts. One tablespoon of flax seeds is: 37 calories, one gram protein, three grams fat and two grams carbohydrates. Flaxseed, also known as linseeds, contain their omega-3 fats in the fibrous outer shell of the seed, which humans can't digest easily. If you want to increase your omega-3 levels, it is best to eat flaxseed that has been ground.



Sunflower seeds: Sunflower seeds supply healthy unsaturated fats along with a range of minerals, such as magnesium, copper, manganese and high levels of vitamin E. One tablespoon of sunflower seeds is: 51 calories, two grams protein, 4.5 grams fat and two grams carbs.

Sesame seeds: Sesame seeds contain copper, a mineral essential for numerous enzymatic reactions in the body, including those involved in energy production and the performance of your

nervous system. One tablespoon of sesame seeds is: 51 calories, two grams protein, 4.5 grams fat and two grams carbs.

According to MyPlate, nuts and seeds are a good source of protein and fiber. They are also a concentrated source of calories, so it is important to eat the recommended portion size.

These are some ideas to incorporate seeds into meals:

- Sprinkle on salads, yogurt, cottage cheese
- Blend into cereals and smoothies
- Toast them for a crunchy taste added to granola and/or trail mix
- Chia is hydrophilic—it absorbs several times its weight in water—you can use the seeds to create healthy fruit spreads and puddings. Chia gel is also used in vegan baking to act as a binder in lieu of eggs.

As with any food/food groups, always read the food labels for seeds (including seed powders). Be aware of food safety issues surrounding recalls of foods, as these sometimes will include seeds. Always check with your health care provider, especially if you have restrictions to seeds such as diverticulitis or other dietary conditions.

Almond Crusted Chicken Fingers

Source: Eating Well, Serves 4

Ingredients:

½ cup sliced almonds (other nuts or seeds may be substituted)

¼ cup whole wheat flour

1 ½ tsp. paprika

½ tsp. garlic powder

½ tsp. dry mustard (or 1 tsp. fresh mustard)

¼ tsp. salt

½ tsp. ground pepper

1 ½ tsp. olive oil

4 large egg whites (or 2 eggs)

1 pound chicken pieces

Directions:

Preheat oven to 475°F. Line baking sheet with foil. Set a wire rack on baking sheet and coat with cooking spray or oil.

Place almonds and remaining dry ingredients in food processor or a pint canning jar with blender blades.

Blend until nuts are finely chopped. Transfer mix to shallow dish.

Whisk eggs in second shallow dish. Add chicken pieces and turn to coat. Transfer each to the almond mixture.

Turn to coat evenly. Place chicken pieces on prepared rack and coat with cooking spray or oil. Turn and coat other side of chicken.

Bake the chicken until golden brown, crispy and no longer pink in the center, about 20-25 minutes depending on size of pieces.

