

# inside nutrition



You may see many carved pumpkins this time of year, and while this is a fun tradition, remember that pumpkins are also delicious, versatile and nutritious! Don't throw your jack-o away after the holiday! Pumpkin contains fiber, potassium, and vitamin A.

- Fiber can help promote digestive health, lower cholesterol, control blood sugar, and prevents constipation.
- Potassium is a mineral that acts on several important organs such as the brain, heart, and kidneys. Potassium has been shown to help normalize blood pressure, prevent kidney stones, achieve water balance, and normalize heart beat.
- Vitamin A is an antioxidant that helps prevent cell damage. Vitamin A helps form and maintain healthy skin, teeth, and skeletal tissue. It is also known for maintaining the health of the retina, a specialized tissue in the eye.

Pumpkin can be added to your diet in several ways. The Academy of Dietetics and Nutrition recommends you try some of these recipes with your left over pumpkin:

- Pumpkin smoothie. Mix together pumpkin, fat-free milk, frozen vanilla yogurt, a dash of pumpkin pie spice or cinnamon in a blender.
- Pumpkin pizza. Sauté pumpkin and your other favorite veggies, place on whole-wheat pizza crust drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil and your favorite spices.
- Pumpkin oatmeal. Add fresh cooked or canned pumpkin to your morning oatmeal.
- Pumpkin muffins. Add fresh cooked or canned pumpkin to your favorite muffin batter.
- Pumpkin ravioli. Stuff ravioli with sweet pumpkin instead of meat for a low-fat alternative.



Save the seeds too!! They taste great when toasted and they're nutritious. One ounce of pumpkin seeds provides 5 grams of protein, 5 grams of fiber and 5 grams of fat (1 gram saturated, 4 grams unsaturated).

- To toast pumpkin seeds: Rinse seeds to remove pulp and strings. Spread seeds on a medium baking sheet that has been coated with non-stick cooking spray. Sprinkle lightly with salt or seasoned salt. Bake at 325 degrees Fahrenheit for about 30 minutes or until lightly toasted. Stir occasionally during cooking.

## healthy monday tip

Bite for the Better: Sure calories are an important part of maintaining or losing weight, but so are nutritious, healthy foods. Eating unprocessed foods like fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains increases your energy, lowers your risk of health problems, helps you maintain a healthy weight and sets a good example for friends and family! This week focus on making healthy food swaps at every meal. Replace your lunchtime serving of chips with crunchy carrot sticks, or start your morning with oatmeal and fruit instead of a bagel and cream cheese. You'll soon discover how delicious nutritious foods can be!