

Seeds can add a nutty, salty flavor to snacks and meals, but they also have health benefits. Seeds offer anti-inflammatory properties, promote heart and bone health, and supply essential minerals. TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly).

Pumpkin—Pumpkin seeds are rich with protein minerals. They are thought to promote prostate health, strengthen bones, and reduce inflammation. Sprinkle them over a salad, add them to trail mix, toss them with pasta, or blend them into a muffin mix.

Chia—Chia seeds are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which can have a positive impact on cholesterol. Add them to yogurt, cereal, or oatmeal to get a boost of fiber, calcium, and protein. Soak two tablespoons of chia seeds in water for 15 to 30 minutes, then stir the mixture into water or a sports drink for added stamina during a workout.

Sunflower—Sunflower seeds are a good source of vitamin E, which serves as an antioxidant and contains anti-inflammatory properties. They also offer copper and selenium, protecting your muscles. Add sunflower seeds to a fresh salad, mix into chicken salad, sprinkle over meat, or grind them up for a spread.

Sesame—Sesame seeds are a rich source of copper, which may provide arthritis relief. They also contain calcium and magnesium, which may lower blood pressure, protect against osteoporosis, and more. Mix them with steamed vegetables, sautéed fish or chicken, or add sesame seeds to homemade bread.

Flaxseed—Flaxseed contains alpha linolenic acid (ALA), an omega-3 fat, which may positively impact cholesterol, promote bone health, protect against heart disease, and reduce inflammation. Look for milled flaxseed, ground flaxseed, or flax meal, which is easier to digest, helping your body absorb more of the nutrients. Include it in muffin or pancake mixes, or blend flaxseed into a fruit smoothie.

Sacha Inchi—Sacha Inchi nuts (“Inca Peanuts”) contain omega-3 fatty acids and tryptophan, an amino acid, which can help the body control appetite and sleep. They are also a great source of protein. Use Sacha Inchi nuts in a trail mix or purchase roasted nuts at a health food store.

Roasting tip: When purchasing any of these seeds, buy them raw. Roast seeds at 375 degrees, because higher temperatures may diminish the beneficial nutrients that seeds offer.