

Fun Fact of the Week

6 Surprising Health Benefits of Pumpkin*

By Chris Obenschain

When you think about pumpkins, what comes to mind? Jack-o'-lanterns? Pumpkin pie? Charlie Brown? Pumpkin spice lattes? Well, there's more to these orange gourds than Halloween and sugary (but delicious!) desserts and drinks. Pumpkins have numerous health benefits -- none of which take center stage in autumn's most frequent offerings.



Are you skeptical about taking the pumpkin out of the pie (or cup)? These health benefits may change your mind.

Weight Loss

Pumpkin is rich in fiber, which slows digestion. "Pumpkin keeps you feeling fuller longer," says Caroline Kaufman, MS, RDN and an upwave [diet and nutrition](#) expert. "There's seven grams of fiber in a cup of canned pumpkin. That's more than what you'd get in two slices of whole-grain bread."

Pumpkin may be filling, but it's also a low-calorie superstar. "Canned pumpkin is nearly 90 percent water, so besides the fact that it helps keep you hydrated, it has fewer than 50 calories per serving," Kaufman says.

Sharp Vision

Pumpkin's brilliant orange coloring comes from its ample supply of beta-carotene, which is converted to [vitamin A](#) in the body. Vitamin A is essential for [eye health](#) and helps the retina absorb and process light. A single cup of pumpkin contains over 200 percent of most people's recommended daily intake of vitamin A, making it an outstanding option for optical health.

Pumpkin also contains [lutein](#) and zeaxanthin, two antioxidants that are thought to help prevent [cataracts](#) and may even slow the development of [macular degeneration](#).

Better Immunity

Looking for a way to ward off illness and improve your immune system? Try pumpkin. The large shot of vitamin A the fruit provides helps your body fight infections, viruses and infectious diseases. Pumpkin oil even helps fight various bacterial and fungal infections. Plus, pumpkin is packed with nearly 20 percent of the recommended amount of daily [vitamin C](#), which may help you recover from [colds](#) faster.

Younger-Looking Skin

Sure, eating pumpkin can help you look younger (beta-carotene in pumpkin helps protect us from the sun's wrinkle-causing UV rays), but the pulp also makes a great, all-natural face mask that exfoliates and soothes. All you need is 1/4 cup pureed pumpkin (not pumpkin pie), an egg, a tablespoon of honey and a tablespoon of milk. Mix, then apply it, wait for 20 minutes or so and wash it off with warm water.

Lower Cancer Risk

Beta-carotene is great for your [eyes](#) and [skin](#), but you know what else it's good for? Fighting [cancer](#). Research shows people who eat a beta-carotene-rich diet may have a lower risk of some types of [cancer](#), including [prostate](#) and [lung cancer](#).

[Vitamins](#) A and C are "a kind of cell defense squad," Kaufman says. "[They] are both antioxidants, and they act as shields for your cells against [cancer](#)-causing free radicals."

It (May) Help Treat Diabetes

In scientific tests, pumpkin has been shown to reduce [blood glucose levels](#), improve glucose tolerance and increase the amount of [insulin](#) the body produces. More testing needs to be done before we can say for sure what pumpkin's benefits for diabetics will be, but if you have [diabetes](#), munching on pumpkin certainly won't hurt.

*[*https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/6-surprising-health-benefits-of-pumpkin#1](https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/6-surprising-health-benefits-of-pumpkin#1)*