



## Pumpkin Health Benefits

### Medical Use of Pumpkin

In North America, the time between Halloween and Thanksgiving Day is the season colored by pumpkins. The fruits represented historically a good harvest and its resulting happiness. Pumpkins were said to be at the first Thanksgiving feast shared by the pilgrims and Indians in 1620. The Pumpkin's flowers, leaves, and fruit are all edible. Pumpkin flowers and young leaves can be used to make soup, or cooked with meat and other ingredients. The pumpkin fruit can be steamed, stewed with meat and potatoes, or baked into pumpkin pies. The best part of a pumpkin is the part most people throw away while carving a Jack O' Lantern for Halloween or preparing a pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving dinner. It is the pumpkin seed. Pumpkin seed is enriched with vitamins, minerals, amino acids. Roasted pumpkin seed is a nutritional snack. Pumpkin seeds also have therapeutic values and are used to treat a number of disease conditions throughout the world.

### Expel intestinal parasites:

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, there is a long history of the use of pumpkin seeds (peeled raw seeds) to expel intestinal parasites such as tape worms, round worms, and schistosomiasis. A popular remedy for parasitic worms in the digestive tract is to mix pumpkin seeds and onion with a little soy milk. To make this remedy, use a blender to liquefy three tablespoons of pumpkin seeds, one-half of a small onion, one-half cup of soy milk, and one teaspoon of honey. Take this mixture three times daily, three days in a row. It is a very safe remedy for children and pregnant women.

### Prostatic hyperplasia:

Pumpkin seed oil has been used to effectively reduce symptoms of an enlarged prostate, or prostatic hyperplasia. Researchers have suggested the zinc, free fatty acid, and plant sterol contents of pumpkin seeds might account for their benefit to men with prostatic hyperplasia. Benign prostatic hyperplasia is classified into two

stages. Stage 1 is manifested with frequent urination and numerous interruptions of sleep during the night. Stage 2 shows symptoms include urgency and incomplete emptying of the bladder. Pumpkin seeds are considered an alternative treatment for both stage 1 and 2 benign prostatic hyperplasia.

#### Kidney stones:

Studies have found that eating pumpkin seeds as a snack can help prevent the most common type of kidney stone, called a calcium oxalate stone. Pumpkin seeds appear to reduce levels of substances that promote stone formation in the urine and to increase levels of substances that inhibit stone formation. The active constituents of pumpkin seeds responsible for this action have not been identified. As much as 10 grams per day of pumpkin seeds may be needed for kidney stone prevention. In addition, pumpkin seed has been used to alleviate an irritable bladder. Animal studies have shown that pumpkin seed extracts can improve the function of both the bladder and urethra.

#### Impotence:

Pumpkin seeds contain substances that stimulate sex hormone production. The seeds contain large amounts of zinc, magnesium, iron, phosphorus, calcium, vitamin A, and vitamin B. Eating a handful of Pumpkin seeds a day may, therefore, help prevent impotence. Bulgarian mountain dwellers, Hungarian Gypsies, Anatolian Turks, Ukrainians, and Transylvanians all eat Pumpkin Seeds as part of their everyday diets. Originally intended to prevent prostate ailments (probably due to the high zinc content), Pumpkin Seeds have been found by all of these cultures to prevent impotence as well.

#### Arthritis:

The healing properties of pumpkin seeds have also been investigated recently 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 exhibit one extremely negative side effect of indomethacin i.e. pumpkin seeds did 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.

### Other Therapeutic Values

Pumpkin seeds are said to be a diuretic and help in the treatment of urinary tract infections. Ethiopians chew pumpkin seeds as a natural laxative. Pumpkin Seeds and husks also aid milk production in lactating mothers, and are used to reduce postpartum swelling of the hands and feet. There is a case report on pumpkin seed as a remedy for gout.