

The amazing benefits of sunflower oil

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The health benefits of sunflower oil include its ability to improve heart health, boost energy, strengthen the immune system, improve skin health, prevent cancer, lower cholesterol, protect against asthma and reduce inflammation.

What is sunflower oil?

Sunflower oil is a non-volatile oil that can be easily extracted from sunflowers. Although most people are already familiar with sunflowers, they don't immediately think of sunflowers as a source of an extremely healthy vegetable oil that can replace some of the less healthy cooking oils available on the market. Sunflower oil is also used in certain cosmetic applications.

The main producers of sunflower oil are Russia, Ukraine and Argentina, but the oil is used throughout the world in the preparation of various cuisines.

Sunflower oil is used in cooking and frying, in cosmetics such as lip balms and skin creams, and as a medicine for the heart, as it is low in cholesterol.

Sunflower oil nutrition

According to the USDA, sunflower oil is rich in vitamin E, vitamin K, phytosterols, and monosaturated fatty acids.

One of the primary reasons for the growing popularity of sunflower oil is its impressive fatty acid content, which includes palmitic acid, stearic acid, oleic acid, lecithin, carotenoids, selenium, and linoleic acid. The combination of fatty acids in the body is extremely important to maintain various elements of human health, and sunflower oil can help maintain that balance.

Some of those fatty acids, as well as vitamin E (tocopherols) and other organic compounds, act as antioxidants in

sunflower oil, which means they can have a positive effect on a range of conditions from which people regularly suffer. Sunflower oil contains more polyunsaturated fats than any other commonly used vegetable oil, and with the recent trend towards healthy eating and searching for alternative options, sunflower oil is becoming sought after on the international market.

Sunflower oil also has fascinating health benefits for everyone. Let's explore them in detail.

Lowers cholesterol levels

The fatty acids found in sunflower oil, including a substantial amount of linoleic acid (an omega-6 fatty acid) are very well balanced, according to a study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Finding a healthy balance between HDL or good cholesterol (omega-3s) and LDL or bad cholesterol is very important. Sunflower oil does not contain any saturated fats, which means that it can actually reduce overall cholesterol content in the body.

Relieves athlete's foot

Sunflower oil is an effective remedy for providing relief from athlete's foot (*Tinea pedis*), a fungal infection that starts between the toes. The topical application of sunflower oil to the affected area helps to fight and cure the infection.

Boosts heart health

Sunflower oil, taken in moderation, is a good choice for people who want to keep an eye on their heart health and prevent atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis can clog arteries, raise blood pressure and increase the chances of suffering a heart attack or stroke. The presence of choline, phenolic acid, monounsaturated fats,

and polyunsaturated fats in sunflower oil boosts energy and reduces the risk of incurring cardiovascular disease.

Improves immune system

In a study published in the *Food Chemistry Journal*, Spanish researchers confirmed that sunflower oil is rich in vitamin E, which acts as an antioxidant in the body. Vitamin E has been directly connected to preventing heart disease and boosting the immune system.

Skin care

Sunflower oil, rich in vitamin E, is specifically related to improving skin health and regenerating cells. This means the skin is better protected against damage from the sun, as well as the natural degradation of age that occurs when free radicals are present in the body. Antioxidants such as vitamin E neutralise free radicals and prevent them from destroying or damaging healthy cells.

Using sunflower oil reduces the visibility of scars, helps to heal wounds and gives a healthy, natural glow to the skin. This is a major reason why sunflower oil is commonly used in cosmetic applications. Some people use sunflower oil to massage premature infants with low birth weight or other complications. It has been claimed that this effectively lowers the chances of the infant developing skin infections. Since the infant's organs (including the skin) are underdeveloped, the oil acts as a protective barrier. However, there is insufficient scientific evidence in the literature to substantiate this benefit of sunflower oil.

Boosts energy levels

The fatty acid content in sunflower oil is connected to energy levels in the body. Saturated fats can make one



feel sluggish, while unsaturated fats, many of which are present in sunflower oil, can keep energy levels up.

Anti-cancer potential

As mentioned above, sunflower oil is rich in antioxidants and substances that act as antioxidants. Vitamin E, which has a group of compounds known as tocopherols, is a powerful antioxidant that can eliminate free radicals before they mutate healthy cells into cancerous cells. There are a number of ongoing research studies to verify the effects of sunflower oil on a wider variety of cancers.

Reduces inflammation

Asthma, a respiratory condition that ranges from mild to life-threatening, affects millions of people worldwide. Sunflower oil has been positively correlated to fewer and less intense asthma attacks. This is because of its anti-inflammatory qualities, derived from the vitamin content of sunflower oil and its beneficial fatty acids. This has been confirmed by Dr Michael James of the University of Adelaide in a study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Reduces the severity of arthritis

Along with asthma, sunflower oil has also been linked to a reduction in the severity of arthritis.

Protects the body

Fatty acids have a significant effect on the general immune system and increase the body's ability to resist attacks by infection, says Dr Parveen Yaqoob of the University of Reading. Sunflower oil is a rich source of fatty acids, which protects the skin by strengthening the membrane barriers, making it more difficult for bacteria and viruses to enter the body.

Prevents infections

Sunflower oil is highly recommended for infants because it can protect them from infections, particularly prematurely delivered babies who are highly susceptible to infections. Adults who use sunflower oil enjoy the same benefits, although the effects are not as dramatic in adults.

In today's fast-paced lifestyle with its chronic levels of stress there is hardly time to check and consume nutritious foods, but by using sunflower oil in the kitchen, the quality of the cooking can be improved.

A fatty diet, fast food and a lack of exercise may lead to obesity. There is a fast-moving generational trend to choose foods and meals containing unhealthy ingredients that may have a lasting impact on health. Many of these foods provide no protein, vitamins or essential nutrients. The incorporation of sunflower oil into the diet offers consumers a chance of leading a healthy life by reaping the benefits it offers.

A word of caution

Although the fatty acids in sunflower oil are important and essential in the diet, sunflower oil does have a higher omega-6 content than most other vegetable oils. There has been some concern about this, particularly for people who have problems with obesity or cholesterol.

If sunflower oil is eaten in excess without the intention of boosting omega-3 intake, it can result in an imbalance of fatty acids in the body, which is dangerous. A 2018 study also shows its adverse effects on the liver.

As long as certain health factors are monitored, sunflower oil can be a beneficial addition to the diet. 🌻

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