

Benefits of Buckwheat



GRAIN OR SEED?

Buckwheat is usually referred to as a whole grain. However, it is actually the seed of the fruit of the buckwheat plant, similar to rhubarb. Native to Northern Europe and Asia, buckwheat is a staple in Russia and Poland. Most Americans typically know buckwheat as a flour used in pancakes, since it is most commonly used as a gluten-free substitute for wheat.

Although there is “wheat” in the name, buckwheat and wheat are not related. Hulled kernels are called groats. When roasted, they are called kasha, and have a rich, nutty flavor.

NUTRITION PROFILE

Buckwheat is most valued for its high-quality protein since it contains all of the essential amino acids for building proteins, including lysine, which is usually missing in grains. This protein profile makes buckwheat an potential substitute for meat in vegetarian diets. The protein and fiber combination helps with satiety and can assist with weight loss.

One cup cooked buckwheat groats provides 155 Calories, 6 grams of protein and 5 grams of dietary fiber.

Buckwheat is rich in flavonoids, particularly *rutin* and *quercetin*, plant compounds which help fight dangerous free radicals that can lead to disease. It is rich in B vitamins important for energy production, nerve health and the breakdown of fats. It is an excellent source of minerals like potassium for fluid and blood pressure balance, manganese, which activates digestive enzymes, copper for production of blood cells and magnesium to support bone health.

Like all plant foods, buckwheat contains no cholesterol.

BUCKWHEAT AND YOUR HEALTH

Diets that contain buckwheat have been linked to lower risk of chronic disease, particularly heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

Heart Disease

The flavonoid *rutin* has been shown to lower help reduce risk of heart attack and stroke by reducing LDL cholesterol and platelet clotting, and raising HDL cholesterol. Rutin may also help lower blood pressure.

Diabetes

Buckwheat is high in dietary fiber which keeps blood sugars lower than wheat. The compound *chiro-inositol* helps make cells more sensitive to insulin. It contains resistant starch, which lowers the blood sugar response and the high magnesium affects insulin formation and release. High levels of magnesium are associated with reduced risk of type 2 diabetes.

Cancer

A single cup of cooked buckwheat contains more than 20% of the daily fiber recommendation, which reduces risk of colon, stomach and breast cancers. Lignans, a type of antioxidant, defend against hormone-based cancers like breast cancer.



Oregon State
University

stephanie.polizzi@oregonstate.edu
631 Alder Street, Myrtle Point, OR 97458
541-572-5263 ext 25291
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/coos>

Digestion

Because of buckwheat’s high fiber content, it stimulates peristalsis, the muscle contraction of the intestines to move food through quickly. This is known to reduce irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and diarrhea. Fiber also acts as an appetite suppressant. Buckwheat fiber is also a prebiotic for beneficial bacteria keeping our gut healthy.

Immune Function

Not only does buckwheat contain compounds (rutin) that defend against free radicals, this powerful seed also contains more antioxidants like tocopherols (vitamin E) and selenium than other grains. These compounds boost the action of vitamin C which protects organs, nerves and other tissues from oxidative damage.

Gallstones

Excess bile acid production increases risk of developing gallstones. Because the fiber in buckwheat helps move food more quickly through the digestive tract, this reduces the secretion of bile acids. Bile is essential for digesting fats.

A low-fat diet is also associated with reduced risk of gallstones. Substituting buckwheat for animal products that are high in saturated fat can also reduce risk of gallstones.

Asthma

Low levels of magnesium and vitamin E are associated with the development of childhood asthma. These nutrients found in buckwheat provide anti-inflammatory benefits.

Bone Health

Although calcium is associated with bone health, it cannot be absorbed without magnesium. Low levels of magnesium are associated with bone loss. Buckwheat is rich in magnesium, as well as selenium, which slows bone loss.

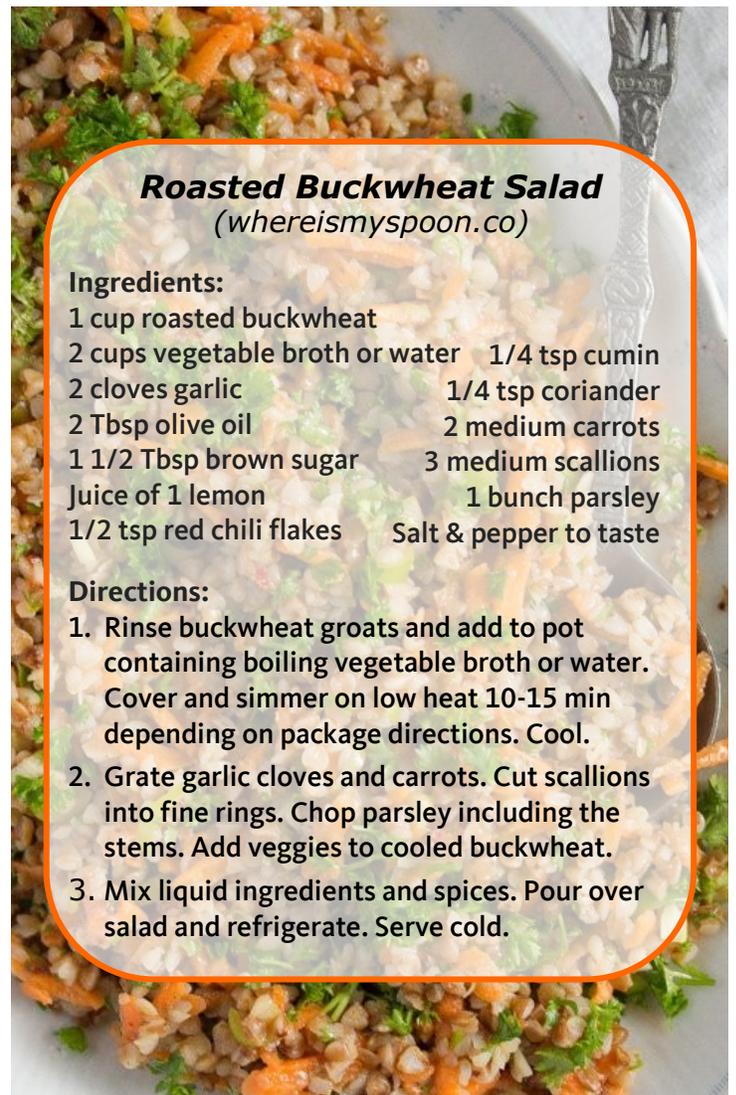
The copper and zinc in buckwheat are essential for the mineralization of bones and teeth. Zinc is also required for the activation of vitamin D, which helps absorb calcium into our bones.

HOW TO ENJOY BUCKWHEAT

Buckwheat is delicious as a hot breakfast cereal. Top with blueberries for a heart-healthy start to your day. It can be added to soups and stews or as a side dish instead of rice or pasta. Cool cooked buckwheat and use in summer salads with fruit or vegetables.

Buckwheat groats can be stored in airtight containers for up to a year. Flour is best refrigerated or frozen to prevent oxidation.

Buckwheat flour can be used in bread, muffin, crepe and pancake recipes, and in the making of soba noodles. It has a stronger flavor so if you’re just starting out with buckwheat, begin with 25% and work your way to 50% substitution for other flours.



REFERENCES

Everydayglutenfreegourmet.ca	Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
Hsph.harvard.edu	Nutritionfacts.org
Lpi.oregonstate.edu	Whereismyspoon.co