

Australian Oilseed Federation

Nutrition Fact Sheets



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Nutritional Benefits of Sunflower Products

Sunflower seeds are one of nature's most nutritious foods. They are packed full of healthy unsaturated oils, protein and fibre, plus essential nutrients that help keep your body in peak health.

Sunflowers are native to North America where they were discovered some 5000 years ago and were eaten extensively by the American Indians.

The seeds are small, flat beige-coloured (light) kernels which are encased in a black or grey striped hard outer shell.

Sunflower seeds

Nutrient composition of raw sunflower seeds

Nutrient	Per 30g	Per 100g
Protein (g)	7	23
Fat (g)	15	51
Carbohydrate (g)	1	2
Kilojoules (kJ)	720	2395
Fibre (g)	3	11

Data from NUTTAB

Nutrition facts

Sunflower seeds make a healthy and nutritious snack and eating just a handful a day makes good nutrition sense. They are a long-time staple of vegetarians and vegans who don't eat meat as they are a good source of vegetable protein.

The seeds contain just over 50 per cent fat which is made up of the 'good' polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats in the following ratio (average figures only):

Fat composition	
Polyunsaturated	66%
Mono	23%
Saturated	11%

Sunflower seeds are an excellent source of B vitamins, particularly niacin and folate, and contain magnesium, phosphorous, potassium and zinc with smaller amounts of iron and calcium.

They contain good amounts of fibre and are important for their vitamin E - ¼ cup of sunflower seeds gives you 4.6mg of vitamin E which is around half of the recommended daily intake.

Vitamin E is a well-studied antioxidant that is under study for its ability to protect oxidation of the bad LDL-cholesterol. It also keeps our blood free-flowing, by making blood cells less likely to clump and form clots.

Sunflower oil

Nutrient composition of most common oils in Australia

Nutrient	Per Tbsp	Per 100g
Protein (g)	0	0
Fat (g)	18	100
Carbohydrate (g)	0	0
Kilojoules (kJ)	680	3700
Fibre (g)	0	0

Data from NUTTAB

There are two types of Sunflower oil, namely, polyunsaturated oil and monounsaturated oil. A brief description follows:

Polyunsaturated:

Polyunsaturated sunflower oil represents the traditional oil composition from the sunflower seed. It is rich in polyunsaturated fats and can lower blood cholesterol levels. Sunflower oil is often used as an ingredient to make polyunsaturated margarines

Monounsaturated:

Monounsaturated sunflower (Monosun & Sunola) oil is made from the seeds of sunflower plants that have been bred to be higher in monounsaturated fat than those of traditional plants. This oil is also lower in saturated fat than traditional sunflower oil.

The high levels of monounsaturated fats makes this an ideal oil for frying and roasting, as it is very heat stable and its lower levels of saturated fats have positive benefits for heart health.

Nutritional Facts

When used to replace saturated fats in the diet, both types of sunflower oil can help to reduce levels of blood cholesterol.

Uses

- ◆ Cooking
- ◆ Salad dressings
- ◆ Commercially used to make margarine
- ◆ Used to cook the well-known 'Kettle' potato crisps

Easy ways to add sunflower to your diet

- ◆ Use monounsaturated sunflower oil for longer life frying and in sauces, dressings and marinades
- ◆ Use polyunsaturated sunflower oil for grilling and making your own mayonnaise and salad dressings
- ◆ Toss a tablespoon of toasted sunflower seeds through a salad just before serving

- ◆ Add sunflower seeds to stir-fried vegetables or to cooked carrots or broccoli with a splash of sunflower oil
- ◆ Use as a topping for home-made bread, cakes or muffins
- ◆ Mix with almonds, walnuts, sultanas and dried apricots for a quick snack
- ◆ Make into sunflower butter or spread similar to peanut butter or tahini by churning in a processor (add a little sunflower oil to achieve the right smooth consistency)

How to toast sunflower seeds

To toast sunflower seeds toss in a dry frying pan over medium heat for a minute or two or until they become a golden colour. Transfer to a cool plate immediately to stop the cooking process. Alternatively, microwave on high (100%) for 20-30 seconds.

Storage

Sunflower seeds should be kept in a cool, dry place in a tightly closed container away from light.

TOASTED OAT & SUNFLOWER MUESLI

Here's a delicious home-made muesli recipe based on sunflower seed. It's wheat-free and high in fibre.

Makes approx. 1 kg or 20 serves

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup slivered almonds
- ½ cup sultanas
- ¼ cup chopped dried apricots
- ¼ cup currants

PLACE oats, seeds and almonds on a large baking tray and spread out in an even layer. Bake in a hot oven 200°C for 5 minutes. Turn over and leave for a further 5 minutes or until golden around the edges.

TURN into a large mixing bowl and leave to cool. Add remaining ingredients and mix.

SERVE with milk, soy milk or yoghurt and sliced fruit.