

# Nutritional Power of **SUNFLOWER** Seeds



VOLUME 3.1

## Sunflower Seeds Shine in Light Of 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines

*With the growing rates of obesity and chronic disease in the U.S., it is no surprise that the major recommendations of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines are for Americans to eat fewer calories, be more active and make wiser food choices (1). Sunflower seeds fit well into the Dietary Guidelines because they are a nutrient-rich food with healthful fats and plant protein.*

### Guidelines Focus on Nutrient-Rich Foods

For the first time, the U.S. Dietary Guidelines include a focus on eating nutrient-rich foods to improve health and to reduce the risk of chronic disease. Nutrient-rich foods are those that provide substantial amounts of vitamins and minerals for relatively few calories. Sunflower seeds are a perfect example of this—just one ounce is a good source of protein, fiber, zinc, vitamin B6, and folate, and is an excellent source of phosphorus, copper, selenium, pantothenic acid, and vitamin E. The guidelines point out that by eating nutrient-rich foods it is easier to meet nutrient needs while staying within your recommended calorie range.

The Dietary Guidelines recommend that nutrients consumed should be primarily from foods, not supplements. Whole foods, like sunflower seeds, contain not only the vitamins and minerals that are often found in supplements, but also hundreds of naturally occurring substances, like phytochemicals, that may also protect against chronic diseases.



### Guidelines Focus on Specific Nutrients Lacking In American Diets

According to the Dietary Guidelines, there are several nutrients that American diets lack, including calcium, potassium, fiber, magnesium, vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin E. Sunflower seeds contain many of these nutrients and are particularly rich in vitamin E, fiber, and magnesium.

Sunflower seeds are listed in the scientific report of the Dietary Guidelines as *the best whole food source of vitamin E*, just above almonds. This important nutrient is

*"Keep total fat intake between 20 to 35 percent of calories, with most fats coming from sources of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids, such as fish, nuts, and vegetable oils."*

- 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines

thought to help prevent heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and dementia (2,3). The healthy unsaturated fat in sunflower seeds assists in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamin E. NuSun™ sunflower oil is also an excellent source of vitamin E.

Sunflower seeds are also rich in fiber. Most Americans only consume about half of the fiber they need each day. Fiber-rich diets can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. The Dietary Guidelines recommend consuming 14 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories. For the average 2000-calorie diet, that means 28 grams of fiber daily. A one-ounce serving of sunflower seeds contains 3 grams of fiber.

Magnesium is another important nutrient that many Americans lack. A one-ounce serving of sunflower seeds supplies 9 percent of the Daily Value for magnesium. Data from the Nurses' Health Study and Harvard School of Public Health suggest that a higher intake of magnesium may reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes (4), one of the fastest growing health epidemics in America.



Nutrition research also shows that getting enough magnesium in your diet may be important in preventing heart disease.

## Guidelines Focus on Type of Fat

The 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines are clear in recommending that consumers decrease the "bad" fats in their diets and substitute the "good" poly- and monounsaturated fats. Specifically, the recommendation is to, "consume less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fatty acids and less than 300 mg/day of cholesterol, and keep trans fatty acid consumption as low as possible." The guidelines go on to say, "Keep total fat intake between 20 to 35 percent of calories, with most fats coming from sources of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids, such as fish, nuts, and vegetable oils."

The Guidelines state that unsaturated fats are an important part of a healthy diet because they, "supply energy and essential fatty acids and serve as a carrier for the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K and carotenoids. Fats serve as building blocks of membranes and play a key regulatory role in numerous biological functions."

Sunflower seeds are an excellent source of unsaturated fats in the diet, providing both mono- and polyunsaturated fats. Sunflower oil is listed by name in the scientific report as an example of a healthful liquid vegetable oil.

In addition, newer varieties of sunflower oil, like NuSun™ sunflower oil, can help food service and food manufacturers reduce the levels of both trans and saturated fats in their products while providing healthy mono- and polyunsaturated fats.

## Guidelines Focus on Eating Patterns

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recognize a growing body of research demonstrating the benefits of a healthful eating pattern in reducing the risk of chronic diseases. One recent study reported that about 16 percent of deaths among men and 9 percent of deaths among women could be prevented by adapting desirable eating behaviors, such as those outlined by the Dietary Guidelines and other healthful eating patterns (5).

One of the suggested eating plans to reduce the risk of disease is the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stopping Hypertension) diet. The DASH diet is an eating plan that has

been clinically proven to lower blood pressure in hypertensive men and women. This eating plan may also be effective in preventing hypertension, according to a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (6). While the DASH Diet is an entire eating plan, a significant element of the diet includes a recommendation to consume four to five servings from the nuts, seeds, and legumes group each week. In this eating plan, a serving of sunflower seeds is equal to two tablespoons or one half ounce.

## References:

1. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. [www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines)
2. Kushi, L.H., Folsom, A.R., Yochum, L.A. Intake of Antioxidant Vitamins and Risk of Death from Stroke in Postmenopausal Women. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2000;72:476-83.
3. Engelhart, MJ. Dietary Intake of Antioxidants and Risk of Alzheimer Disease. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2002;287(24):3223-9.
4. Fung TT, Manson JE, Solomon CG, Liu S, Willett WC, HU FB. The association between magnesium intake and fasting insulin concentration in healthy middle-aged women. *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*. 2003;22:533-538.
5. Kant, AK, et al. Dietary patterns predict mortality in a national cohort: The national health interview surveys, 1987 and 1992. *Journal of Nutrition*. 2004;134:1793-9.
6. Appel, L.J., et. al. A clinical trial of the effects of dietary patterns on blood pressure. DASH Collaborative Research Group. *The New England Journal of Medicine*. 1997;336(16):1117-1123.

### Put Sunflower Seeds Into Your Daily Diet

Here are some simple ways to incorporate a daily dose of wholesome and healthful sunflower seeds into your daily diet:

- Add sunflower seeds to your favorite muffin or bread recipe.
- Make your own trail mix by combining dried fruit, whole grain cereal, nuts and sunflower seeds.
- Try a small handful of sunflower seeds for a crunchy, nutrient-rich snack.
- Sprinkle sunflower seeds and fresh berries on low-fat yogurt for a quick breakfast.

For more information on NuSun™ sunflower oil or sunflower seeds, contact:



4023 State Street • Bismarck, ND 58503 • 701-328-5100 • FAX: 701-328-5101  
[www.sunflowernsa.com](http://www.sunflowernsa.com)