

What Are the Benefits of Eating Soup?

Soup is a quick, hot meal that offers plenty of health benefits. You can throw a variety of ingredients into a slow cooker in the morning before you leave for work or school and return home to a delicious meal in the evening. The healthiest soups include fresh, low-fat ingredients and a minimum of salt and extra fat. You can use up leftovers in a soup pot and create new variations of favorite recipes, since soup lends itself to experimentation. Soups are easily digestible and provide the body with required nutrients. The nutrients present in vegetable soups are more than you would get by eating fried or cooked vegetables, because the nutrients are not lost. Because of the liquid in soups, your body remains hydrated, restoring the necessary water balance of your body. Thus a bowl of soup helps in keeping the blood pressure under control. They also naturally keep your body warm. Eating more soup can help you warm your body up as well as fight and recover from a cold faster. Soups or stew don't require as much energy from the body to digest which allows the body to use more energy to fight off infection and viruses that invade the body.

Vegetables: The American Heart Association recommends adults consume eight or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day. That's 4 ½ cups. Soups can contribute to that total. Almost any vegetable lends itself to use in soup, from creamy squash or tomato bisques to vegetable beef or chicken vegetable soup. Add fresh or frozen vegetables to canned soups to increase the servings of vegetables and add flavor. Most vegetables are naturally low in calories and fat, cholesterol-free and rich in many vitamins and minerals essential for human health, such as vitamins A, C, E; potassium, folate, magnesium, carbohydrates and dietary fiber. Adding them to a soup increases the likelihood you will consume the minimum amount daily. In addition to adding chopped vegetables and leafy greens to your soup, you can puree them and use them as a thickener for the soup broth. For example, peeled, cooked and mashed sweet potatoes or butternut winter squash add flavor, texture and count toward your recommended intake of vegetables.

Nutrients: Soups made with beans and lean meats such as fish provide lean protein. Beans also give you fiber. Tomatoes are a good source of lycopene, an antioxidant that may help reduce the risk of cancer, particularly prostate cancer, according to Penn State University. Vegetables in soup contain many vitamins, such as A and C. Cream soups supply calcium and vitamin D. You can help prevent many diseases and ailments like heart disease, cancer or stroke by eating one bowl of soup a day. Low salt soups can flush your body of excess waste. Eating simmered soup can build your immune system. When you slowly simmer foods like soup, you release the therapeutic properties of food and preserve the nutritional content of the food. Your immune system needs plenty of vitamins and minerals to function properly so make it a point to eat more soup to reap the health benefits of it.

Low Fat: Most soups, if made with lean meat, are low in fat, making them a good choice for anyone concerned about fat in his diet. Use fat-free broths and lean meat to reduce the fat content of soups. The University of California Cooperative Extension Service recommends using skin milk for cream soups. Or, instead of milk, you can use pureed white beans to thicken soup. To further reduce the fat content of your soup without sacrificing flavor, chill it and skim off the fat before reheating and serving.

Filling: Because soup contains so much water it fills you up with fewer calories. When Barbara Rolls, Ph.D., conducted research at Penn State University, she discovered that students who ate chicken and rice soup instead of a chicken and rice casserole, consumed fewer calories yet reported being equally satisfied. Rolls is author of the book, The Volumetrics Weight Control Plan, in which she explains how eating soup and other high-volume, low-calorie foods can help you lose weight. The overall premise is that the protein in hearty soups helps satisfy your hunger, and the nutrient rich liquid is digested rapidly and signals your brain that you're full. Unlike what happens during stewing and frying – vegetables, mushrooms, meat and poultry cooked directly in soups conserve much more of their natural nutrients, vitamins and general essence. And despite the fact that soups usually contain a lot less calories than the main dish, they aren't any less nutritious or filling.

Weight Control: Soups are good for helping you lose weight as well as combating obesity. According to a research study published in "Appetite" in November 2007, consuming soup enhances satiety, or a feeling of fullness, reducing caloric intake. Study authors tested the effects on meal intake of consuming different soups in 60 normal-weight men and women before lunch once per week for five weeks. The different types of soups included broth and vegetable soup, chunky vegetable soup, chunky pureed vegetable soup or simply pureed vegetable soup. Each week, one of the four types of soup, or no soup, was consumed before lunch, which was a test meal served 15 minutes after the soup was served. Results showed consuming any type of soup significantly reduced test meal intake and total caloric intake by 20 percent compared with having no soup. Since the type of soup did not significantly effect total caloric intake, choosing a low-calorie soup before eating a meal is a recommended strategy for lowering total caloric intake. This offers benefits for weight management and even weight loss.

Sources: <http://www.livestrong.com>

<http://www.ehow.com>