

Health benefits of Butternut squash

- Butternut squash composes of many vital polyphenolic antioxidants and vitamins. Like in other Cucurbitaceae members, butternut too has very low calories; 100 g provides just 45 calories. It contains no saturated fats or cholesterol; however, is a rich source of dietary fiber and phytonutrients. Squash is one of the common vegetables that often recommended by dieticians in the cholesterol controlling and weight reduction programs.
- It has more **vitamin-A** than that of in pumpkin. At **10,630 IU per 100 g**, it is perhaps the single vegetable source in the Cucurbitaceae family with the highest levels of vitamin-A, constituting about 354% of RDA. Vitamin-A is a powerful natural anti-oxidant and is required by the body for maintaining the integrity of skin and mucosa. It is also an essential vitamin for healthy eyesight. Research studies suggest that natural foods rich in vitamin-A help the human body protected against lung and oral cavity cancers.
- Furthermore, butternut squash has plenty of natural polyphenolic flavonoid compounds like α and β -carotenes, cryptoxanthin- β , and lutein. These compounds convert into vitamin-A inside the body and deliver same protective functions of vitamin-A in the body.
- It is rich in the B-complex group of vitamins like folates, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin B-6 (pyridoxine), thiamin, and pantothenic acid.
- It has a similar mineral profile as that in pumpkin, containing adequate levels of minerals like iron, zinc, copper, calcium, potassium, and phosphorus.
- **Butternut squash seeds** are an excellent source of dietary fiber and mono-unsaturated fatty acids that benefit for heart health. Also, they are rich in protein, minerals, and numerous health-benefiting vitamins. The seeds are an excellent source of health promoting amino acid, **tryptophan**. Tryptophan converts to health benefiting GABA neurochemical in the human brain.

Butternut-Almond Soup with Fennel and Popcorn

This rustic soup uses the squash flesh and skin, so you get more fiber. Almond butter adds creamy body and protein, plus belly-filling MUFAs that may help you lose weight. A crunchy popcorn topping adds even more fiber—and ups the fun factor, too.

SERVINGS: 4

2 tsp coconut oil
2 tsp ground fennel seed
1 tsp dried thyme
1 med onion, diced
1 med butternut squash, seeded and cubed
5 c low-sodium vegetable broth
¼ c creamy almond butter
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 c air-popped popcorn

1. SAUTE the fennel and thyme in the coconut oil in a large stockpot until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the onion, butternut squash, and salt and pepper to taste. Cook 5 to 7 minutes more, until the vegetables begin to soften. Add the vegetable broth, cover, and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, until squash is completely soft.

2. ALLOW soup to cool slightly. Transfer soup to a blender and add the almond butter. Blend until smooth.

3. TRANSFER soup back to stockpot to reheat, if necessary. Divide soup among four bowls, topping each with ¼ c of the popcorn. Serve hot.

NUTRITION (per serving) 258 cal, 7 g pro, 38 g carb, 11 g fiber, 3 g sugars, 11 g fat, 2 g sat fat, 188 mg sodium