

Ask the Expert: What Are Seed Oils?

Written by Emma Araya, Purdue University Nutrition and Dietetics '26

Seed oils have been a recent topic in the news and social media. Seed oils refers to the oil that comes from the seeds of certain plants like sunflowers, hemp seeds, and canola. The oil is extracted from the seed using heat. Seed oils are produced at a larger scale than other oils like avocado and olive, which means they are often less costly to produce and to buy.

So, why are seed oils a current topic? Many people claim that seed oils are an unhealthy type of fat and can contribute to weight gain. Firstly, seed oils are a type of unsaturated fat, which is essential for a well-balanced diet. Many unsaturated fats, like canola and sunflower oil, contain Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids, which have been shown to help reduce inflammation in our bodies and be good for our eyes. Because seed oils are fats and an unsaturated fat, they are important to help us absorb several vitamins that are attracted to fats. Many of these vitamins are found in fruits and vegetables so consuming a little fat with these foods is a good way to eat them. It is important to pay attention to their serving sizes though, because fats are usually higher in calories. Since seed oils are easier and less costly to produce, they are a good budget-friendly option for cooking and baking. Seed oils can be an important part of a well-balanced and nutritious diet.



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Food Safety: Food Allergies

Written by Nadia Brumbaugh, Purdue University Biology, Foods and Nutrition '27

Food allergies are very common among Americans. Food allergy reactions happen when the body has an allergic response to the proteins in food. There are 9 main foods that cause up to 90% of food allergies. These include milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, and sesame. A person who eats a food they are allergic to can have symptoms like breaking out in rashes, hives, in severe cause these foods can cause death. The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 has helped to lessen the number of allergic reactions by making sure food labels clearly state the allergens in them. If you or a loved one have a food allergy or if you want to lessen the risk of contaminating foods with any allergens, follow these tips:

- Always read the food label or package before you eat it. If a food or packaged item does not contain a food label, it should be avoided.
- Be careful of cross contamination. Cross contamination happens when foods or food surfaces come in contact with allergens and are then contaminated. It can be helpful to use “allergen-safe” utensils, plates, and kitchen supplies when available or use your own.
- Check skin-care, over-the-counter medications, and cleaning supplies. Sometimes these products contain some of the allergens that are also present in food.



Sources: <https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-food-labeling-and-critical-foods/food-allergies>, <https://www.foodallergyawareness.org/food-allergy-and-anaphylaxis/food-labeling/food-labeling/>, <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/hemp/pdf/Allergens%20and%20Food%20Labeling.pdf>

Baked Cauliflower Tots

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400F
2. In a medium sized bowl, add the chopped or grated cauliflower and egg. Fold with a spoon or spatula until combined.
3. Add the rest of the ingredients to the mixture
4. Press the mixture and form 15 small balls shaped like tots. Place on a lightly greased medium-sized baking sheet.
5. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown. Enjoy!

Ingredients (1 serving)

- 2 cups grated or finely chopped cauliflower
- 1 egg*
- 3 tbsp any flour (all-purpose, whole-wheat*)
- 1/4c grated cheese*
- 1/4 tsp salt



Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 109
Protein: 6g
Carbs: 10g
Fat: 5g

Source: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/baked-cauliflower-tots>

**foods included in the
TEFAP (The Emergency Food
Assistance Program)*

Eating Right: Preventing Constipation

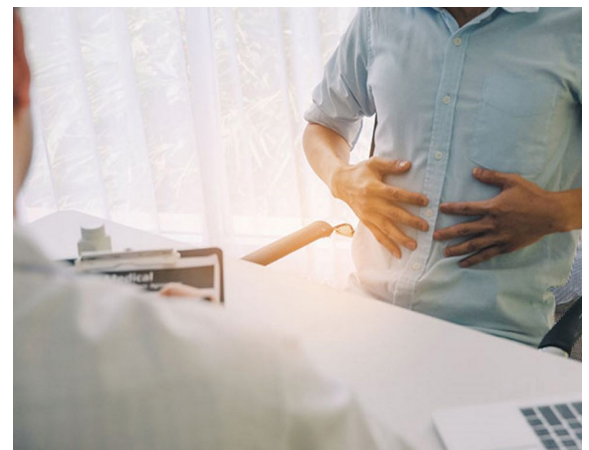
Written by Yaxuan (Elaine) Wang, Purdue University Nutrition and Dietetics, Fitness and Health '25

Have you ever wondered what happens to food after you eat it? There are many things that happen in our body that help with breaking down food, known as digestion. The gastrointestinal (GI) system is the place where digestion happens and the GI system is the part of your body that helps break down food to use it for energy. Some parts of food can not be digested and leave the body as waste. Constipation happens when that waste becomes hard, dry, or difficult to pass. In general, having less than three bowel movements per week is considered constipation. One reason for constipation is not eating enough fiber, other reasons could be not drinking water or getting



enough exercise. To help prevent constipation, it's important to eat a combination of foods, especially those that are high in fiber. Fiber-rich foods include many different types of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans. Follow these tips to avoid getting constipation:

- Try to do moderate-intensity exercise 4-5 times a week: This can be walking, cycling, jogging or dancing. Doing regular exercise helps the digestive and bowel system work properly.
- Decrease foods that are lower in fiber. Eating fiber-rich grains like brown rice and whole-wheat bread can help increase your fiber intake and help with regular bowel movements.
- Avoid waiting use the restroom. If you feel like you have to go, you should go as soon as you are able. Holding it can make it harder go later on.



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This newsletter is edited by Emma Araya and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In The News: February is American Heart Month!

Written by Emma Araya, Purdue University Nutrition and Dietetics '26

February marks American Heart Month! This month helps to raise awareness and provide tips to Americans for a happy healthy heart. In the United States, heart disease is the leading cause of death in women and men of most racial and ethnic groups. Heart disease can happen because of several things like a high salt diet, too much saturated fats, lack of exercise, smoking, and even because of genetics and family history. This makes heart health awareness important for the American population. Follow these tips for a healthy heart:

- Try to exercise 4-5 times per week. Because the heart is a muscle, it's important to keep it active. Try running, walking, or even dancing!
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole-grains, and legumes. Try to avoid foods like chips, sweets, and candy, and saturated fats in foods.
- Avoid adding salt to your meals and try other seasonings like lemon juice and black pepper, herbs, and spices.



Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/data-research/facts-stats/index.html>, <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/how-to-help-prevent-heart-disease-at-any-age>