

Join us for the Fitwize

Nutrition Session

Friday, October 18

4 to 5 PM!

This month we will talk about pumpkins! We will learn the nutritious benefits of eating pumpkin, as well as the many ways to add pumpkin to some favorite foods, like yogurt, oatmeal and smoothies.



All Things Pumpkin!

By Stephanie Mull, MS, RD, CSSD, CSCS

Pumpkin is back! Like many others, I get very excited for fall because pumpkin starts finding its way into many foods and drinks. The number of pumpkin flavored products grows every year. I have seen pumpkin pie popcorn, pumpkin Oreos, pumpkin spice almonds and pumpkin spice Pringles. Then, of course, there are the classics, like pumpkin spice lattes, pumpkin beer and pumpkin baked goods like, muffins, breads and donuts.

Pumpkins are part of the squash family so it is considered a vegetable and therefore a great source of many nutrients.

- The orange color is one indication that pumpkins are full of the antioxidant, beta-carotene, which converts to vitamin A in the body. Beta-carotene and vitamin A keep cells and tissues healthy and promote better vision.
- Pumpkins are also lower in calories but higher in fiber. A high-fiber diet helps keep the gut healthy and can lower cholesterol levels. Fiber can also promote satiety, which means our appetite should be better regulated.
- Pumpkins are a good source of vitamin C, which helps support our immune system. This time of year, it's important to get enough vitamin C to fight off those germs.
- Lastly, pumpkins are an excellent source of potassium. Research shows that ingesting adequate potassium can help regulate and even lower blood pressure. Potassium is also an important electrolyte, which aids in fluid balance.

To enjoy pumpkin foods, you don't have to buy all of those pumpkin flavored products that catch your eye in the store. A healthier alternative would be to stock up on cans of pureed pumpkin and then find ways to sneak some into your cooking. You can add pureed pumpkin to chili, pasta sauce, oatmeal or yogurt for a nutrient boost. You can also whisk pureed pumpkin into pancake mix for a delicious alternative to a breakfast favorite. Below is a pumpkin smoothie recipe that has proven to be extremely popular with kids! Try this one at home and enjoy the pumpkin season!

Pumpkin Pie Smoothie

1 frozen banana
½ cup vanilla Greek yogurt
¼ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp pumpkin pie spice
½ cup skim milk (or you can use almond, 1 or 2% milk, or soy)
2 Tbsp maple syrup
2/3 cup pumpkin puree
1 cup ice
Add ingredients to a blender and blend on high until well combined (at least 1 minute). Makes 16 oz.

