



Taken from: www.authoritynutrition.com/11-proven-benefits-of-quinoa

Quinoa is the world's most popular "superfood." It is loaded with protein, fiber and minerals, but doesn't contain any gluten. Here are 11 proven health benefits of quinoa.

Health Benefits

Quinoa is Incredibly Nutritious:

Quinoa is a grain crop that is grown for its edible seeds. It is pronounced *KEEN-wah*. It technically isn't a cereal grain, but a pseudo-cereal. In other words, it is basically a "seed" which is prepared and eaten similarly to a grain.

Quinoa was an important crop for the Inca Empire back in the day. They referred to it as the "mother of all grains" and believed it to be sacred. It has been consumed for thousands of years in South America, although it only became trendy and reached "superfood status" a few years ago. These days, you can find Quinoa and products made with it all over the world... especially in health food stores and restaurants that emphasize natural foods. Quinoa is non-GMO, Gluten free and usually grown organically. Even though not technically a grain, it still counts as a "whole grain" food.

NASA scientists have been looking at it as a suitable crop to be grown in outer space, mostly based on its high nutrient content, ease of use and how easy it is to grow. The year 2013 was actually called "The International Year of Quinoa" by the United Nations (UN), based on its high nutrient value and potential to contribute to food security worldwide.



Quinoa Contains Potent Bioactive Substances Called Quercetin and Kaempferol:

The health effects of real foods go way beyond the vitamins and minerals we're all familiar with. There are thousands of trace nutrients in there... and some of them are extremely healthy. This includes interesting molecules called flavonoids, which are plant antioxidants that have been shown to have all sorts of beneficial effects on health. Two flavonoids that have been particularly well studied are Quercetin and Kaempferol... and they happen to be found in large amounts in Quinoa. In fact, the quercetin content of quinoa is even higher than typical high-quercetin foods like cranberries. These important molecules have been shown to have anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, anti-cancer and anti-depressant effects... at least in animal studies. By including quinoa in your diet, you will significantly increase your total intake of these (and other) important nutrients.

It is Very High in Fiber... Much Higher Than Most Grains:

Another important benefit of quinoa is that it is high in fiber. One study that looked at 4 varieties of quinoa found a range of between 10 and 16 grams of fiber, per every 100 grams of uncooked quinoa. This equals 17-27 grams per cup, which is very high... more than twice as high as most grains. Boiled quinoa contains much less fiber, gram for gram, because it absorbs so much water. Unfortunately, most of the fiber is *insoluble* fiber, which doesn't appear to have the same health benefits as *soluble* fiber. That being said, the soluble fiber content is about 2.5 grams per cup (or 1.5 grams per 100 grams), which is still decent. There are numerous studies showing that soluble fiber can help reduce blood sugar levels, lower cholesterol, increase fullness and help with weight loss.

Quinoa is Gluten Free and Perfect for People with Gluten Intolerance:

According to a 2013 survey, about a third of people in the U.S. are currently trying to minimize or avoid gluten. A gluten-free diet can be healthy, as long as it is based on foods that are *naturally* gluten free. The problems arise when people eat "gluten free" foods made with refined starches instead. These foods are no better than their gluten-containing counterparts, because gluten free junk food is still junk food. Well... many researchers have been looking at quinoa as a suitable ingredient in a gluten-free diet, for people who don't want to give up staples like breads and pasta. Studies have shown that by using quinoa instead of typical gluten-free ingredients like refined tapioca, potato, corn and rice flour, it can dramatically increase the nutrient and antioxidant value of the diet.

Quinoa is Very High in Protein, With All the Essential Amino Acids That we need:

Protein is made out of amino acids. Some of them are termed "essential" because we cannot produce them and need to get them from the diet. If a food contains all the essential amino acids, it is seen as a "complete" protein. The problem is that many plant foods are deficient in certain essential amino acids, such as Lysine. However... quinoa is an exception to this, being particularly high in in all the essential amino acids. For this reason, quinoa is an excellent source of protein. It has both *more* and *better* protein than most grains. With 8 grams of quality protein per cup of cooked quinoa (or 4.5 grams per 100 grams), quinoa is an excellent plant-based protein source for vegetarians and vegans.



Quinoa Has a Low Glycemic Index:

The glycemic index is a measure of how quickly foods raise blood sugar levels. It is known that eating foods that are high on the glycemic index can stimulate hunger and contribute to obesity. Such foods have also been linked to many of the chronic, Western diseases that are so common today... like diabetes and heart disease. Quinoa has a glycemic index of 53, which is considered low. However... it's important to keep in mind that quinoa is still pretty high in carbs, so it is not a good choice for a low-carb diet, at least not in large amounts.

It is high in Minerals That Most People Don't Get Enough of, Especially Magnesium:

There are many nutrients in the modern diet that people tend to be lacking in. This is particularly true of some minerals... especially Magnesium, Potassium, Zinc and (for women) Iron. Interestingly, quinoa is very high in all 4 minerals. It is particularly high in magnesium, with one cup having about 30% of the RDA. The problem is that quinoa contains a substance called phytic acid, which can bind these minerals and reduce their absorption. However, by soaking and/or sprouting the quinoa before cooking it, you can reduce the phytic acid content and make these minerals more bioavailable. Quinoa is also pretty high in oxalates, which reduce the absorption of calcium and can cause problems for certain individuals with recurring kidney stones.

Quinoa May Have Some Major Benefits for Metabolic Health:

Given the high amount of beneficial nutrients, it makes sense that quinoa could lead to improvements in metabolic health. Although this needs to be studied more thoroughly, I did find two studies (one in humans, the other in rats) that examined the effects of quinoa on metabolic health. The human study found that using quinoa instead of typical gluten-free breads and pastas significantly reduced blood sugar, insulin and triglyceride levels. The rat study found that adding quinoa to a diet high in fructose almost completely inhibited the negative effects of fructose.

Quinoa is loaded with Antioxidants:

Quinoa also happens to be very high in antioxidants. Antioxidants are substances that neutralize free radicals and are believed to help fight ageing and many diseases. One study looked at antioxidants in 10 foods... 5 cereals, 3 pseudocereals and 2 legumes. Quinoa had the highest antioxidant content of all 10. Allowing quinoa seeds to sprout seems to increase the antioxidant content even further.

Quinoa Has Several Important Characteristics That make it a Weight Loss Friendly Food:

In order to lose weight, we need to take in fewer calories than we burn. It is known that certain properties of foods can facilitate this process... either by boosting metabolism (increasing calories out) or reducing appetite (lowering calories in). Interestingly, quinoa has several such properties. It is high in protein... which can both increase metabolism and reduce appetite significantly. The high amount of fiber should also help to increase feelings of fullness, making us eat fewer calories overall. The fact that quinoa has a low glycemic index is another important feature, but choosing such foods has been linked to reduced calorie intake. Although there is currently no study that looks at the effects of quinoa on body weight, it seems intuitive that it could be a useful part of a healthy weight loss diet.



Healthy Foods

Health Benefits: Quinoa

Quinoa is Easy to Incorporate into Your Diet:

The last one is not a health benefit, but still incredibly important. It is the fact that quinoa is very easy to incorporate into your diet. It is also tasty and goes well with many foods. Depending on the type of quinoa, it can be important to rinse it with water in order to get rid of saponins, which are found on the outer layer and can have a bitter flavor. However, some brands have already been rinsed, so this may not be necessary. You can buy quinoa in most health food stores and many supermarkets. It is also available on Amazon, with many reviews, testimonials and usage tips from real customers.