



HEALTH BENEFITS OF SUNFLOWER OIL

THE ORGANIC FACTS

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Some of the health benefits of cooking with Sunflower oil include its ability to improve heart health, boost energy, strengthen the immune system, improve your skin health, prevent cancer, lower cholesterol, protect against asthma, and reduce inflammation.

Although most people are already familiar with sunflowers, those vibrant beautiful flowers that can be found all over the world, many people do not immediately think of sunflowers as a provider of an extremely healthy vegetable oil that can replace some of the less healthier cooking oils on the market. Sunflower oil is also used in certain cosmetic applications, for reasons which we will explore later in this article. Sunflower oil is a non-volatile oil that can be extracted from sunflowers relatively easily. The main producers of Sunflower oil are Russia, Ukraine, and Argentina.

One of the primary reasons for the growing popularity of sunflower oil is its impressive fatty acid content, which includes palmitic acid, stearic acid, oleic acid, and linoleic acid. The combination of these fatty acids in the body is extremely important in maintaining various elements of human health.

Furthermore, some of these fatty acids, as well as vitamin E and other organic compounds, act as antioxidants in sunflower oil, meaning they can positively affect a huge range of conditions. It also has more polyunsaturated fats than any other commonly used vegetable oil, and with the recent craze of eating healthy and searching for alternative options, sunflower oil is becoming quite desirable on the international market! Now, let's explore the fascinating health benefits of Sunflower oil in more detail.

Heart Health: The balance of fatty acids found in sunflower oil, including a good amount of linoleic acid (an omega-6 fatty acid) is very good. Although omega-6 fatty acids are typically considered "bad" cholesterol, they are still essential in the body. The problem is, most people have too much! Finding a healthy balance of good cholesterol (omega-3s) and bad cholesterol is very important. Furthermore, sunflower oil doesn't contain any saturated fats, which means that it can actually reduce your overall cholesterol content in the body. This means that you are far less likely to develop atherosclerosis, which clogs arteries, raises blood pressure, and increases

your chances of suffering a heart attack or a stroke. Sunflower oil, in moderation, is a good choice for those who want to keep an eye on their heart health!

Skin Health: Sunflower oil is rich in Vitamin E, which acts as an antioxidant in the body. It has been directly connected to preventing heart disease and boosting the immune system. Furthermore, vitamin E is specifically related to improving skin health and regenerating cells. This means that your skin is better protected against damage from the sun, as well as the natural degradation of age that occurs when free radicals are present in the body. Antioxidants like vitamin E neutralize free radicals, keeping them from destroying or damaging healthy cells. You can see an increased reduction in scars, quicker wound healing, and a healthier natural glow to your skin. This is why sunflower oil is commonly used in cosmetic applications!

Energy Booster: The fatty acid content in sunflower oil is also connected to energy levels in the body. Saturated fats can make you feel sluggish, while unsaturated fats, of which sunflower oil has many, can keep you feeling energized and ready to face your day!

Cancer Prevention: As mentioned above, sunflower oil is rich in antioxidants and substances that act as antioxidants. Vitamin E, which has varieties known as tocopherols, is a powerful antioxidant that can eliminate free radicals before they can mutate healthy cells into cancerous cells. Specifically, sunflower oil has been linked to preventing colon cancer, but there are a number of research studies ongoing to verify its effects on a wide variety of cancers.

Anti-Inflammatory Capacity: Asthma affects millions of people around the world, and this respiratory condition can range from mild to life-threatening. Sunflower oil has been positively correlated with lowering the amount and severity of asthma attacks because of its anti-inflammatory qualities which is derived from its vitamin content, as well as the beneficial fatty acids sunflower oil contains. Along with asthma, sunflower oil has also been linked to a reduction in severity of arthritis, which is an inflammatory disease.

Immune System Health: Antioxidants in the body also have a significant effect on the general immune system and the ability of the body to resist infection. Sunflower oil protects the skin by strengthening the membrane barriers, thereby making it harder for bacteria and viruses to enter the body. For newborn infants, sunflower oil is highly recommended for rubbing on their skin because it can protect babies from infections, particularly when they are born premature when they are highly susceptible to infections. This same benefit is extended to adults who use the oil as well, although the effects are not quite as dramatic or obvious.

A Final Word of Caution: Although the fatty acids in sunflower oil are important and essential in our diet, sunflower oil does have a higher Omega-6 content than most other vegetable oils. There has been some concern about this, particularly for people who already have problems with obesity or cholesterol. If sunflower oil is eaten in excess, without intentionally boosting your Omega-3 intake, then it can result in an imbalance of fatty acids in the body, which is dangerous. As long as you monitor how your body is responding and how you feel, then sunflower oil can be a huge benefit to your diet!

** Information is for education purpose only. Consult a medical practitioner for health problems.

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Topically Applied Sunflower Seed Oil Prevents Invasive Bacterial Infections in Preterm Infants in Egypt:

A Randomized, Controlled Clinical Trial

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Abstract

Background: Because the therapeutic options for managing infections in neonates in developing countries are often limited, innovative approaches to preventing infections are needed. Topical therapy with skin barrier-enhancing products may be an effective strategy for improving neonatal outcomes, particularly among preterm, low birth weight infants whose skin barrier is temporarily but critically compromised as a result of immaturity.

Methods: We tested the impact of topical application of sunflower seed oil 3 times daily to preterm infants <34 weeks gestational age at the Kasr El-Aini neonatal intensive care unit at Cairo University on skin condition, rates of nosocomial infections and mortality.

Results: Treatment with sunflower seed oil (n = 51) resulted in a significant improvement in skin condition ($P = 0.037$) and a highly significant reduction in the incidence of nosocomial infections (adjusted incidence ratio, 0.46; 95% confidence interval, 0.26–0.81; $P = 0.007$) compared with infants not receiving topical prophylaxis (n = 52). There were no reported adverse events as a result of topical therapy.

Conclusions: Given the low cost and technologic simplicity of the intervention and the effect size observed in this study, a clinical trial with increased numbers of subjects is indicative. Our controlled clinical trial reveals that Sunflower Seed Oil as a topical therapy reduced infections by 14% and with further studies this oil has the potential to save newborn lives in many other developing countries.

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Anoint Them with Oil: Easy Treatment Cuts Infection Rates in Premature Infants

Christen Brownlee

In developing countries, babies that arrive prematurely with low birth weights have mortality rates that exceed 50 percent. Infections are to blame for many of these deaths. A new study suggests that one way to curb infections and save babies' lives is as close as the grocery store.

Unlike full-term babies, premature infants have skin that isn't fully developed. They also lack vernix, a creamy, white film with a variety of protective properties, including antibacterial activity. "We thought [their skin] may not function well to guard against pathogens entering the body," says Gary Darmstadt of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Seeking a barrier against infection as preemies' skin matures, Darmstadt's team worked with 497 low-birth weight infants admitted to a hospital in Bangladesh. To enroll in the study, babies had to be born at less than 33 weeks' gestation and weigh less than 1,500 grams (about 3 pounds).

The infants were randomly divided into three groups. All received normal care, but two of the groups also received massages—one using sunflower-seed oil, the other, Aquaphor, a petroleum-based ointment.

Nurses applied the emollients everywhere except the babies' faces and scalps three times daily during the first 2 weeks of life, then twice a day until the babies were discharged from the hospital. Because the infants were admitted at different times after birth, some infants started treatment on their first day of life and others started it later.

Darmstadt, and his colleague's, tracked the blood borne infection rates in all three groups between 1998 and 2003. Overall, babies treated with sunflower-seed oil were 41 percent less likely to develop infections than were those who received conventional care. The percentage jumped to 56 percent when treatment started within 24 hours of birth. The percentage rate jumped to 61 percent when Sunflower Oil treatment started within 12 hours of birth. Researchers reported these results in the March 16 *Lancet*. Aquaphor's overall effectiveness was less clear.

Darmstadt notes that massaging babies with Sunflower oil is a common practice in many cultures. Throughout South Asia, for example, mustard-seed oil is the emollient most commonly used on infants. However, an earlier study on mice suggested that this oil might have toxic effects. In addition, Darmstadt's further research has revealed that Sunflower-seed oil appears to be a culturally acceptable alternative for mothers and nurses in Bangladesh.

Massaging preterm infants with sunflower-seed oil "is something that just about anybody can do." Darmstadt says.

Alfred Lane, a dermatologist at Stanford University calls the study's results "really excellent." The challenge, he says, is to get sunflower-seed oil into the hands of mothers who might otherwise opt to buy cheaper emollients that may not cut infection rates.

Letters:

Regarding the therapeutic effects of sunflower-seed oil on infants, has any research been done as to the health benefits of the oil in any other age group?

Yael Levy
New York, NY

Research to date has focused on newborns, says researcher Gary L. Darmstadt of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. However, a few studies have suggested that Sunflower oil massage enhances wound healing in older children. Sunflower oil massage of all ages is practiced extensively in South Asia, he adds.—C. Brownlee

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