**Flaxseeds**

For a teeny tiny seed, the flaxseed sure does pack a punch!  Regular consumption of flaxseeds delivers huge quantities of lignans and alpha linolenic acid (not to mention bunches of fiber).   Why do we care? Well...

* **Alpha linolenic acid is an essential omega-3 fat that produces anti-inflammatory effects**.  This means fewer symptoms of asthma, less arthritis, fewer migraines, and less chance of osteoporosis.
* In the standard American diet, the ratio of omega-3 to omega-6 fats is skewed.  We tend to take in too much omega-6, which promotes inflammation and bone loss.  **Increased omega-3 consumption (through foods like flaxseeds and walnuts) helps readjust that ratio**.
* **Omega-3 fats help reduce the formation of blood clots**-which means less risk of heart attack and stroke.
* **Omega-3 fats also keep cell membranes flexible**, enabling better absorption of nutrients and eliminations of waste.  There's no point in extra healthy eating if the nutrients can't make it all way into your cells, now is there?
* **Flaxseeds also do an amazingjob of controlling cholesterol**.  One study found that people who ingested 20 grams (about 2 tablespoons) of ground flaxseeds each day reduced their cholesterol counts at about the same rate as those who took statin drugs.
* **Flaxseed also contains high quantities of lignans**, which protect against breast cancer in post-menopausal women.  Lignans also work to cut off the blood supply to tumors, thus reducing the likelihood of cancerous growth.
* AND, regular flaxseed intake has been shown to reduce dry eyes and minimize hot flashes.

Pretty impressive for a little seed, huh?

**And flaxseeds are versatile, too**.  Flaxseed can be eaten whole or ground (they're pretty tasty sprinkled on salads, in smoothies, meatloaf, cereals, oatmeal, pancakes, waffles, peanut butter, or other dishes) or used as a base for raw crackers, breads, and cookies.   And flaxseed oil makes for a great salad dressing-light and yummy drizzled over air-popped popcorn with a little sea salt!!

One of my friends makes about the easiest dressing I've ever seen using flax oil:  she uses a spray bottle to mist oil on the salad, and then seasons it with fresh-ground sea salt and pepper.  It's amazingly good for something so simple!

Add ground flaxseed to your diet gradually. Adding too much fiber to your diet at one time can produce some uncomfortable gastrointestinal effects which can be reduced with a gradual increase. When adding ground flaxseed to your diet, drink plenty of water to prevent constipation. Discover the great nutty taste and health benefits of flaxseeds!

Bowden, J. (2007). *The 150 healthiest foods on earth*. Massachusetts: Fair Winds Press.

Holford, P. (2004). *The optimum nutrition bible* (revised and updated ed.). California:

 Crossing Press.