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THE FIT FACTOR

LIFESTYLE CHANGE

Oats are among the healthiest grains on Earth and ideal to kick-start your day. They're a gluten-free whole grain and a great source of important vitamins, minerals, fibre, and antioxidants.

FITNESS TIP

We often avoid certain muscle groups that we may not enjoy training but these are the ones you should make a bigger effort to work on, as they may become weak and cause muscle imbalance.

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OATS are among the healthiest grains and are ideal to kick-start your day. They're a gluten-free whole grain and a great source of important vitamins, minerals, fibre, and antioxidants.

The health benefits of natural porridge oats, excluding the instant sachets, are huge.

- They contain more fibre than a slice of wholemeal bread;
- Low in fat;
- Virtually sugar-free;
- Contain minerals such as manganese, copper and iron, as well as the B vitamins;

- Help lower cholesterol;
- Boost your immune system;
- Prevent blood sugar spikes.

However, the soluble fibre in porridge is the real health boosting benefit.

Known as beta glucan, it forms a thick gel-like substance in the gut once digested, makes you feel fuller sooner, but is also the reason why porridge helps to balance your immune system, lower your cholesterol and help fight cancer.

Studies have found that eating 3g of beta glucan a day (around what you'd get in a 70g bowl of oats) can

reduce your levels of harmful cholesterol by around 7% which is similar to the results you would expect to see from taking a statin, yet unlike a statin it has no potential side-effects.

A study from Harvard University looked at the health of 100,000 people and found that those who ate the most wholegrains, such as porridge, seemed to be protected from many illnesses, including heart disease.

The study went on to say that regularly eating wholegrains could extend life expectancy. Of course

just because porridge has all these health benefits doesn't mean you should eat monster portions, moderation is the key.

You can have it sweet by adding frozen or fresh fruits and, rather than honey or syrup, cinnamon is a healthier sugar-free option to sprinkle on.

You can also try a savoury version by adding a pinch of sea salt, sprinkled with crushed walnuts and linseeds.

Porridge can be prepared with your choice of milk or with water

suiting vegans or anyone suffering from lactose intolerance. Preparing oats with water will also help cut down on your calorie intake.

The UK buys nearly twice as much porridge as we did 10 years ago with some brands doubling sales in the last few years.

Sales are booming so much that producers are churning out oats all year round to cope with demand. If you're looking for a healthy and inexpensive breakfast, porridge is a good option.

