

Don't Fear the Potato!

Potatoes can be part of a healthful eating pattern

Potato Myths:

Myth #1: Eating potatoes causes obesity. The assumption that potatoes are an energy-dense food may be based on their high carbohydrate content, which contributes approximately 95% of the total calories, but that doesn't mean that eating potatoes causes weight gain. In fact, a 3-oz serving of baked potato, including the skin, has only 94 calories compared to a 3-oz portion of cooked pasta with 158 calories.

Myth #2: Potatoes aren't a good source of protein. In fact, one medium-sized baked potato contains 4 grams of high-quality protein. The quality of the potato protein, which reflects its digestibility and amino acid content, is between 90 and 100 and is higher than any other commonly-consumed vegetable protein.

Don't fear the potato!

It seems like no one wants to admit that they eat white potatoes, yet **potatoes are the #1 vegetable crop in the world.** While French fries and potatoes smothered in cheese, sour cream, and bacon certainly don't qualify as healthful foods, the humble white potato is packed with important nutrients.

Potatoes originated approximately 7,000 years ago in the Andes in South America, and were brought to Europe by Spanish explorers. It's believed that Irish immigrants brought potatoes with them to the United States in the early 1700s, but potatoes didn't

become an important food source in the US until the 1800s.

According to an article published in 2013 in *Advances in Nutrition*, historically, fresh potatoes were consumed daily by most Americans. Over the past 50 years, fresh potato consumption declined by almost 50%, while processed potato consumption increased by two-thirds. The change is due to the increased availability of French fries, other frozen potato products, potato chips, and dehydrated potatoes.

Potatoes are a good source of vitamin B6, vitamin C, and niacin. They contain the

minerals potassium, copper, manganese, and phosphorus. In fact, **white potatoes contain more potassium per standard serving than any other vegetable.** Include the skin when you prepare potatoes, and they're also a good source of fiber. Furthermore, potatoes contain a variety of phytonutrients, which are nutrients produced by plants that help promote overall health. And just in case you needed any more reason to love potatoes, they're **low in saturated fat and sodium**, two ingredients that, when consumed in large amounts, are associated with an increased risk of heart disease.