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5 Health Benefits of Your Thanksgiving Turkey



For some of us, it's all about the sides. Or the out-of-this-world leftover breakfasts on Black Friday morning.

But Thanksgiving just wouldn't be complete without that turkey (sorry, turkey alternatives). And while there are plenty of recipes and cooking methods that might make you think otherwise (deep frying, we're looking at you), turkey is actually pretty powerful in the nutrition department.

Slice yourself a three-ounce serving of light meat (roughly the size of a deck of cards) and you'll also be giving yourself a whole host of nutrients and vitamins your body needs, all for under 200 calories and 6 grams of fat. Here are a few of the highlights.

Protein

On average, women should aim for 46 grams of protein a day and men should shoot for 56. With 25 grams of the stuff in a three-ounce serving of turkey, you'll be well on your way — and for fewer calories and less fat than the same size serving of beef. Keep in mind, however, that not all Americans have no trouble meeting these protein allowances. Yes, we need protein to build and repair cells, and to keep us curbed and lower stroke risk, but it is possible to get too much.

Selenium

That turkey has about 24 micrograms of selenium, more than an adult's daily recommended amount. Selenium plays an important role in thyroid hormone metabolism, and acts as an antioxidant.

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Selenium

That turkey has about 24 micrograms of selenium, almost half of an adult's daily recommended amount. Selenium plays an important role in thyroid hormone metabolism and reproduction and acts as an antioxidant.

Phosphorus

There are around 196 milligrams of phosphorus in your turkey serving. The mineral is mostly used in building healthy bones and teeth, but it's also instrumental in how the body makes protein and uses carbs and fats. Adults generally need about 700 milligrams a day.

B Vitamins

Turkey offers a handful of B vitamins, including niacin, B6 and a little riboflavin. Niacin helps with digestion and turning the food we eat into energy. B6 is important to brain development during pregnancy, immunity and metabolism. And riboflavin also helps convert food to energy and plays an important role in red blood cell production.

Tryptophan

Forget what you think you know about tryptophan: It's not what's making you so sleepy after your Thanksgiving feast.

Now, here's what you should know: It's an essential amino acid, meaning the body can't make tryptophan on its own. We get it from foods, like turkey (although it's not even all that high in it, compared to say, cheese) and it in turn helps the body make niacin (see more on that below) and serotonin, a key brain chemical involved in balancing your mood.

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