

## Know Your Nutrients

There's good reason potatoes have served as a staple food in diets throughout the world. Based on the FDA label (Table 1), the following claims can be made for the potato:

- An excellent source ( $\geq 20$  percent of the DV) of vitamin C
- A good source ( $\geq 10$  percent of the DV) of potassium
- A good source ( $\geq 10$  percent of the DV) of vitamin B6
- Low in sodium ( $\leq 140$  mg/serving) and cholesterol
- Fat-free ( $\leq 0.5$  g fat/serving)

**Table 1: FDA Data for a ~5.3 oz Potato with the Skin\***

Amount	Amount	% Daily Value
Calories (kcal)	110	
Total Fat (g)	0	—
Cholesterol (mg)	0	—
Sodium (mg)	0	—
Potassium (mg)	620	18%
Vitamin C (mg)	27	45%
Vitamin B6 (mg)	0.2	10%
Fiber (g)	2	8%

\*The FDA label represents a composite of varieties (“market- basket approach”) based on typical U.S. consumption patterns (i.e., 70 percent russet, 18 percent white, and 12 percent red).

### Potassium

Few Americans are getting the recommended 4700 milligrams per day of potassium they need. Fortunately, **one medium potato with skin is a good source of potassium, providing 620 milligrams or 18% of the recommended daily value (DV) per serving.** Potatoes provide one of the most concentrated sources of potassium (Table 2) — significantly higher than those foods commonly associated with potassium content (e.g., bananas, oranges, mushrooms, etc.). Potassium is a mineral that is part of every body cell. It helps regulate fluids and mineral balance in and out of cells and in doing so, helps maintain normal blood pressure. Potassium is also vital for transmitting nerve impulses or signals, and in helping muscles contract.

Research suggests that diets rich in potassium and low in sodium reduce the risk of hypertension and stroke. Accumulating evidence suggests that increasing dietary potassium can negate some of the negative effects of dietary sodium on blood pressure, and reducing sodium along with increasing potassium provides greater heart disease protection than intervention alone.

Additionally, research indicates that diets high in fruits and vegetables that are particularly rich in potassium may help maintain lean body mass and bone mineral density as we age.

**Table 2: Potassium Content of Selected “High” Potassium Foods\***

Food Source	Potassium (mg)
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to (1, 5.3 oz)	<b>620</b>
ana (1 med)	400
hrooms (5 med)	300
ssels Sprouts (4 large)	290
taloupe (1/4 med)	280
nge (1 med)	260
pefruit (1/2 med)	220
ach (1_c raw)	130

\* USDA Standard Reference 18

### Vitamin C

**Potatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C (45% of the DV), which is more vitamin C than one medium tomato (40% DV) or sweet potato (30% DV).** This water-soluble vitamin acts as an antioxidant, controlling or eliminating free radicals, thus helping to prevent cellular damage. Vitamin C also aids in collagen synthesis, a process that helps to maintain healthy gums and is important in healing wounds. Vitamin C also enhances the absorption of iron and may help support the body's immune system (Gropper 2008). Although potatoes do not rival the vitamin C content of citrus fruits and peppers, they do contribute significantly to the American's daily vitamin C requirements. In fact, data from the most recent Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (1994-1996) indicates that potatoes rank in the top 5 of dietary sources of vitamin C for Americans (Cotton et al. 2004).

Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin that acts as an antioxidant stabilizing free radicals, thus helping prevent cellular damage. It aids in collagen production; assists with iron absorption; and helps heal wounds and keep your gums healthy. Vitamin C may help support the body's immune system.

### Fiber

**One medium potato with the skin contributes 2 grams of fiber or 8% of the daily value per serving.**

Dietary fiber is a complex carbohydrate and is the part of the plant material that cannot be digested and absorbed in the bloodstream. Dietary fiber has been shown to have numerous health benefits, including improving blood lipid levels, regulating blood glucose, and increasing satiety (makes you feel full longer), which may help with weight loss (Food & Nutrition Board 2002).

### Vitamin B6

**Potatoes are a good source of vitamin B6 with one medium potato providing 10% of the recommended daily value.**

Vitamin B6 is a water-soluble vitamin that plays important roles in carbohydrate and protein metabolism. It helps the body make nonessential amino acids needed to make various body proteins; it is a cofactor for several co-enzymes involved in energy metabolism; and is required for the synthesis of hemoglobin – an essential component of red blood cells.

### Iron

**One medium potato provides 6% of the recommended daily value of iron.**

Iron is a major component of hemoglobin that carries oxygen to all parts of the body. Iron also has a critical role within cells assisting in oxygen utilization, enzymatic systems, especially for neural development, and overall cell function everywhere in the body. Thus, iron deficiency affects all body functions, not only through anemia, which appears late in the process of tissue iron deficits.