



Chives are a common topping for baked potatoes, and many people use the herb in dishes that call for onions. Not only do chives impart a flavor to many recipes, chives also offer some health benefits. According to the horticulture center at Illinois State University, colonists brought chives to America for medicinal purposes. They contain not only vitamins and minerals such as vitamin C and calcium, but also other antioxidants that can help fight cancer.

Improved Heart Health

Registered dietitian Jacqueline Spang of New York-Presbyterian, the University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell, points out that chives contain allicin, an organosulfur that is being studied for its ability to help lower cholesterol and blood pressure. Spang said allicin releases nitric oxide, reducing stiffness in the blood vessels and decreasing blood pressure. Chives also contain quercetin, which may reduce the risk of plaque buildup in arteries. Studies show that people who follow a diet high in flavonoids such as quercetin have lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure levels.

Bone Strength

Chives are a rich source of vitamin K, according to Spang. The vitamin is important for long-term bone health, according to Danya Epstein, naturopathic physician and resident at Bastyr Center for Natural Health. Vitamin K assists the regulation of

cells that help to prevent bone demineralization. It also helps with the production of a bone protein called osteocalcin, which is vital for maintaining bone mineral density.

Antioxidants

Quercetin and vitamin K are two of several antioxidants found in chives. According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, studies show quercetin and other flavonoids have properties that help protect against cancers in the breast, colon, prostate, ovaries, endometrium and lungs. Chives also contain carotenes, zeaxanthin and lutein, which help protect against lung and oral cancers.

Nutrients

Chives contain a host of other nutrients important for a healthy diet. This includes potassium, iron and calcium, vitamins A and C, folate, niacin, riboflavin and thiamin. As a rich source of vitamin C, chives may alleviate a stuffy nose and colds, and folk remedies recommend it for such. In addition, traditional folk remedies use chives to ease an upset stomach and flatulence and stimulate digestion and treat anemia. Chives can be added to numerous dishes for added flavor. Many people associate the herb with baked potatoes, but chives can be used to add a subtle onion flavor to seafood, omelets and other dishes that are suited to just a hint of the onion taste, notes Melissa Peterson, editor of "Edible Memphis."