

# MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

May 2017

## Eating Local and Seasonal: Spinach

By Lisa Lau, Registered Dietitian at the Georgina Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic

May marks the beginning of Ontario's spinach season. Besides being Popeye's favourite vegetable, what else is spinach good for? Well, lots of things actually. Read on to find out!

### Nutritional Goodness

One of the biggest hints to spinach's nutritional powers is the colour in the vegetable. Brightly coloured vegetables often carry the most nutrients. In this case, vitamins A, C and K, along with folate, iron and calcium are just some of the vitamins and minerals that spinach carries. In addition, there are also other plant compounds in spinach such as lutein and zeaxanthin that also provides health benefits.



### Health Benefits

#### *Digestive Health*

Spinach contains insoluble fibre, the type of fibre that helps move things along in your gut to promote regular bowels and prevent constipation. You don't need a lot either. A single cup of fresh spinach (or half a cup of cooked spinach) provides just under 10% of your daily fibre needs!

#### *Eye Health*

Lutein and zeaxanthin are compounds found in plants, mainly green leafy vegetables. A diet with these compounds may help prevent or delay age-related macular degeneration. Besides spinach, good sources of lutein and zeaxanthin include kale, green peas, swiss chard, turnip greens, dandelion greens and zucchini.

### The Big Picture

It is important to note that the best impact on our health comes from a good overall eating pattern, and not from a single food. While spinach contains many essential nutrients, many of its benefits come from the green leafy vegetable family rather than only in spinach itself. Therefore, eating a rainbow of colours from different vegetables and fruit is key to obtain a good balance of different vitamins, minerals and plant compounds.



#### *Preconception and Pregnancy*

Folate (also called folic acid when it is in the supplement form) is an important nutrient before, during and after pregnancy. This nutrient helps ensure proper development of the spine, brain and skull of a growing fetus. Spinach, as well as other green vegetables, legumes and enriched grain products are good sources of folate.

#### *Blood Health*

Spinach contains iron and vitamin K, both of which play a role in the health of our blood. Iron is needed to maintain healthy red blood cells that transport oxygen to our body for proper functioning. It can also be found in other meat and alternative food sources. Vitamin K is a key nutrient for proper blood clotting, and just like many of the above nutrients, can be found in other green leafy vegetables.

# RECIPE OF THE MONTH

May 2017

## *Espinacas con Garbanzos (Spinach with Chickpeas)*

A popular tapa dish from Spain, this recipe is healthy, easy and delicious! Put this on a piece of toast, over some potatoes or with a salad and it can serve as a quick and tasty lunch or dinner with minimal clean up work in the kitchen. Oh, and did I mention this recipe takes zero effort to make? All you've got to do is literally throw everything into a pot!



Makes two cups

### Ingredients:

1 tbsp	Olive oil
1	Garlic clove, minced
1 can	Chickpeas, drained and rinsed
½ bunch	Spinach, roughly chopped
¼ cup	Tomato sauce
¼ tsp (heaping)	Cumin
¼ tsp	Paprika
1/16 tsp	Salt
1	Lemon wedge, juice only
Optional:	Crushed red pepper flakes to taste

### Directions:

1. Heat olive oil on medium high heat.
2. Once heated, add garlic and cook until fragrant.
3. Next, add chickpeas, spinach, tomato sauce, cumin, and paprika and cook until spinach is cooked.
4. Add salt and lemon juice to taste. Then it is ready to serve!
5. For a bit of spice, add crushed red pepper flakes to taste.

### Nutrition information (Per Cup):

410 calories, Fat 9 g (12% DV), Carbohydrate 56 g (20% DV), Fibre 15 g (54%), Protein 20 g, Sodium 230 mg (10% DV), Sugars 4 g, Calcium 20%, Iron 40%, Potassium 15%

Recipe adapted from <http://lobstersquad.blogspot.ca/2007/02/espinacas-con-garbanzos.html>