

Pop It Up! Rebecca Morley, MA

Get out your air-popper and pop-it-up! Popcorn is naturally low in fat, sugar, salt and calories. It is one snack that both you and your children can enjoy knowing you are promoting your health.

The University of Scranton showed that popcorn has some [surprising health benefits](#). Popcorn is high in antioxidants, most notably, polyphenols – a group of natural plant chemicals that have a variety of health benefits. Researchers found that the polyphenol content of good, old-fashioned popcorn rivals that of many fruits and vegetables.

Another health benefit of popcorn? It's a whole grain in the same league as oatmeal, barley, brown rice, and millet. Popcorn retains the bran and germ of the plant which is the source of most of the vitamins and minerals. Three air-popped cups is [equivalent](#) to a single serving of a whole grain food, yet has less than 100 calories.



Popcorn is also a good source of fiber which helps to increase satiety and give a sense of fullness and satisfaction that lasts for hours. This can be helpful for weight control since popcorn without butter is low in calories.

But beware of movie-theater popcorn! A large movie popcorn (20 cups) can contain as many as 1,460 calories, 1,500 grams of sodium and 60 grams of saturated fat. That's 3 days worth of saturated fat! Ready-to-pop bags can be equally scary, so read your labels carefully! The "light" microwave versions contain far less salt and fat.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	
1 cup (8.0 g) ▼	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 31	Calories from Fat 3
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0.4g	1%
Saturated Fat 0.0g	0%
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.2g	
Monounsaturated Fat 0.1g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 1mg	0%
Total Carbohydrates 6.2g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1.2g	5%
Sugars 0.1g	
Protein 1.0g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 0%	Iron 1%

* Based on a [2000 calorie diet](#)

When making your popcorn at home, remember air-popping is best. Try it plain, or perhaps with garlic, salt-free chili powder, or low-fat parmesan cheese sprinkles. If you must, use the salt-shaker (iodized of course) very lightly and just drizzle on a small measured amount of butter or healthy-fat substitute (try the new butter canola oil blend in a tub) . Pop-up a batch today and experience a tasty wholesome snack!

Easy Microwave Popcorn in a Brown Bag

Simply place 1/4 cup of regular popcorn kernels in a paper lunch bag. Fold the end over a couple of times to seal and place in microwave for approximately 2 minutes. All microwaves are different, so watch and listen carefully! When it's done, carefully open the bag, sprinkle salt if desired and shake it down. No oil or butter is needed for the popping. This recipe is both healthier and cheaper than the regular store-bought microwave-able varieties!

