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LEGALISING HEMP

Ashleigh Feltham examines the nutritional hype around the legislation of hemp foods.

There is growing interest for the use of hemp seeds as a new food source and potentially the next super food! So what exactly is all the hype about?

Hemp seeds are hulled or shelled hemp seeds, which are made from a specific hemp strain with low levels of the component that makes you 'high' in marijuana (called tetrahydrocannabinol or TCH). Levels of TCH are less than 0.3 per cent and have no hallucinatory effects. The risk of testing positive to a urine drug test is highly unlikely, although not impossible if you chose to eat enough hemp seeds!

What are the claimed health benefits?

These seeds have been hailed as the 'next super food', claiming to help your body lose weight by lowering food cravings, support your digestion, lower cholesterol and blood pressure, improve circulation, reduce food intolerance, improve your energy levels and improve immunity. Before you get too excited

though, the evidence from these claims are based on unscientific evidence, animal studies or promoting the findings of the benefits already known from other types of seeds or nuts.

Hemp seeds are considered to have similar benefits to other nuts and seeds and are a good source of protein and omega 3 and 6 polyunsaturated fats which are two healthier sources of fat. Per 100g serving, hemp seeds have roughly 33.2g of protein. Compare this to other seeds like pumpkin, which has 29.8g, peanuts (24.4g), or almonds (21.2g) and hemp seeds can stand on their own as a good protein source.

Compared to other nuts and seeds, hemp seeds have a high level of omega 3 fat with around 10.6g per 100g, compared to 5.3g in flaxseed oil, 17.8g in chia seeds or 9g in walnuts.

Omega 6 levels in hemp seeds is also high at around 28g per 100g, compared to 21.2g in almonds, 17g in sesame seeds or 15.2g in walnuts. Although

unlike other nuts and seeds like almonds or sunflower seeds, hemp seeds have no vitamin E.

How can the seeds be used?

Hemp seeds can be used in many ways and have been advertised for uses in salads, smoothies, yoghurt, sandwiches, baked products, cereals and even stirfries and lasagna!

The Bottom Line

Watch this space! Hemp seeds are already used as a food in Europe and Canada and there is a growing push to legalise this food in Australia. There are health benefits of this seed in terms in protein and an unsaturated fat source but be careful not to get caught up in the 'next super food' claims until the stronger types of scientific evidence is there to support these claims.

To read more about the legislation of hemp foods in Australia, check out the article on the [OH! Magazine website](#). **OH!**

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