

## Health Benefits of Spinach

- Spinach is a storehouse for many phytonutrients that have health promotional and disease prevention properties.
- It is very low in calories and fats (100 g of raw leaves provide just 23 calories). Also, its leaves hold a good amount of soluble dietary fiber; no wonder why this leafy greens often recommended by dieticians in the cholesterol controlling and weight reduction programs!
- Fresh 100 g of spinach contains about 25% of daily intake of iron, one of the highest for any green leafy vegetables. Iron is an essential trace element required by the human body for red blood cell production and as a co-factor for an oxidation-reduction enzyme, cytochrome oxidase during the cellular metabolism.
- Fresh leaves are a rich source of several vital antioxidant vitamins like vitamin-A, vitamin-C, and flavonoid polyphenolic antioxidants such as *lutein*, *zeaxanthin*, and *β-carotene*. Together, these compounds help act as protective scavengers against oxygen-derived free radicals and reactive oxygen species (ROS) that play a healing role in aging and various disease processes.
- *Zeaxanthin*, an important dietary carotenoid, is selectively absorbed into the retinal macula lutea in the eyes where it thought to provide antioxidant and protective UV light-filtering functions. It thus helps protect from "age-related macular related macular disease" (ARMD), especially in the older adults.
- Further, vitamin-A is required for maintaining healthy mucosa and skin and is essential for night vision. Consumption of natural vegetables and fruits rich in vitamin-A and flavonoids are also known to help the body protect from lung and oral cavity cancers.
- Spinach leaves are an excellent source of **vitamin-K**. 100 g of fresh greens provides 402% of daily vitamin-K requirements. Vitamin-K plays a vital role in strengthening the bone mass by promoting osteoblastic activity in the bones. Additionally, it also has an established role in patients with *Alzheimer's disease* by limiting neuronal damage in the brain.
- This green leafy vegetable also contains good amounts of many B-complex vitamins such as **vitamin-B6** (pyridoxine), thiamin (vitamin B-1), riboflavin, **folates**, and niacin. Folates help prevent neural tube defects in the newborns.
- 100 g of farm fresh spinach has 47% of daily recommended levels of *vitamin-C*. Vitamin-C is a powerful antioxidant, which helps the body develop resistance against infectious agents and scavenge harmful oxygen-free radicals.
- Its leaves also contain a good amount of minerals like *potassium*, manganese, magnesium, copper and zinc. Potassium is an important component of cell and body fluids that helps controlling heart rate and blood pressure. The human body uses manganese and copper as a co-factor for the antioxidant enzyme, *superoxide dismutase*. Copper is also required for the production of red blood cells. Zinc is a co-factor for many enzymes that regulate growth and development, digestion and nucleic acid synthesis.
- It is also a small source of **omega-3 fatty acids**.

Regular consumption of spinach in the diet helps prevent osteoporosis (weakness of bones), iron-deficiency anemia. Moreover, its soft leaves are believed to protect the human body from cardiovascular diseases and cancers of colon and prostate.

# Spinach soup

- 25g butter

1 bunch spring onions

Finely chopped

- 1 leek

(about 120g), sliced

- 2 small sticks celery

(about 85g), sliced

- 1 small potato

(about 200g), peeled and diced

- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- 1l stock (made with two chicken or vegetable stock cubes)
- 2 x 200-235g bags
- 150g half-fat crème fraîche

## Method

1. Heat the butter in a large saucepan. Add the spring onions, leek, celery and potato. Stir and put on the lid. Sweat for 10 minutes, stirring a couple of times.
2. Pour in the stock and cook for 10 – 15 minutes until the potato is soft.
3. Add the spinach and cook for a couple of minutes until wilted. Use a hand blender to blitz to a smooth soup.
4. Stir in the crème fraîche. Reheat and serve.

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*Recipe from [bbcgoodfood.com](http://bbcgoodfood.com), [April 2012](#)*