

Mandarin Oranges

Antioxidants You can count on mandarin oranges to provide vitamin C, with 1 cup of orange segments delivering 28 percent of the recommended daily intake. Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that neutralizes free radicals, including those resulting from exposure to sunlight. Mandarin oranges also contain the carotenoids beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin. Beta-carotene functions as an antioxidant, but it can also be converted into retinol, which is the form of vitamin A used by cells in the eyes for vision and to support the immune system. Lutein and zeaxanthin are antioxidants that protect the retina from damage and may prevent age-related macular degeneration.

Bone Health Calcium and phosphorus combine to form hydroxyapatite, which is used to build bone and teeth. Old and damaged bone is continuously replaced with new, strong bone throughout your life. It's important to include both minerals as a part of your regular daily diet to ensure you have enough to prevent osteoporosis. Magnesium is another mineral that has a role maintaining bone health by regulating the formation of hydroxyapatite and activating enzymes that form new bone. Low levels of any of these minerals increase the risk of developing osteoporosis. Deficiencies of phosphorus and magnesium are rare, but dietary intakes of calcium are below the recommended amount for many people of all ages, according to the Linus Pauling Institute. One cup of mandarin orange segments provides 3 percent of the recommended daily intake of all three minerals.

Dietary Fiber Dietary fiber is primarily associated with preventing constipation, but there are two types of fiber with different purposes. Insoluble fiber is the type known for keeping food moving through the digestive tract. It also lowers your risk of developing diverticular disease and treats symptoms related to some gastrointestinal problems, such as irritable bowel syndrome. The other type of dietary fiber, soluble fiber, lowers levels of cholesterol and keeps blood sugar balanced after you eat by slowing food absorption. The total dietary fiber in 1 cup of mandarin orange segments is 2 grams, which is 5 percent of the recommended daily intake for men and 7 percent for women.