OATS (Avena sativa)

A healthy choice for breakfast, cookies, breads. They are very nutritious, calm the nervous system, lower cholesterol levels, help blood sugar control, weight management, rich in fiber, helps risk of heart disease, and asthma. It does have gluten, magnesium, Bi (thiamine), Zinc, Phosphorus, antioxidants, folic acid (B9), Vit. B6.

Oatmeal contains natural bioactives. One is Avenanthramide, another is Beta D Glucan.
Avenanthramide is also used in skin cream (aveno), which moisturizes and is anti-inflammatory
Beta D Glucan (also found in barley, rye and mushrooms) is a soluble fiber, good for gut health. It is super anti-inflammatory, and lowers cholesterol, and feeds our gut microbiome.
So oats can be applied to skin wounds. Oat extracts speed up wound healing twice as fast and no scars (Beta D Glucan stimulated the stem cells).

Get a good oatmeal – steel cut are best, has the least amount of processing, very good for oatmeal cereal; rolled oats (aka old fashioned oats) are next best but very good for cookies. Avoid instant oatmeals which are so highly processed that there is very little fiber left; and this also will be higher on the glycemic index for those interested in keeping blood sugar stable.

Other options you might find are oat groats where the whole kernel is cleaned and only inedible hulls are removed, has germ intact with endosperm and bran, oat bran has the most fiber in a groat, removed, eaten as cereal or added to recipes to boost fiber; Scottish oats, Irish oats (same as steel cut). You can also use oatmilk instead of regular milk for any recipe – read the labels to avoid added oils and sugars and chemicals or make your own.

When you have a nice bowl of oatmeal, you should use a little fat in the oatmeal. That could be a spoonful of almond butter, peanut butter, coconut oil, or a few walnuts, or a tsp of butter, or a few slices of avocado. Vitamin A, D, E and K are all fat soluble vitamins and pass through the digestive system unused unless there is fat present. The body needs fat to absorb these properly.

Don't add a lot of dried fruit to your oatmeal. No more than 1 tsp if you want. Dried fruit has a lot of sugar, putting the glucose index up. Instead use fresh fruit like a little chopped apple, or some blueberries, strawberries etc.

Don't use milk or condensed milk with your oatmeal. As you age, you become more lactose intolerant (some are this way their whole life). Casein in milk can also trigger low grade inflammation, worsening skin problems, causing gut discomfort. Instead use the nut milks.

Careful not to add too much honey, maple syrup or brown sugar to your oatmeal. Natural sugars should still be used carefully. When you flood the system with sugars, even natural ones, it cancels out the anti-inflammatory effect of oats. Instead use a dash of cinnamon, a couple drops pure vanilla extract, a bit of unsweetened cocoa powder or cacao, or a mashed banana.

If you are using raw or steel cut oats, soak them before cooking. Oats contain phytic acid which can bind to minerals like iron, zinc and calcium, blocking their absorption. Over time that can lead to deficiencies, especially in older adults. They are also more difficult to digest, giving you bloating, gas or discomfort after your meal. Soak the oats for 4-6 hours, or overnight in filtered water – you can add a splash of lemon juice or apple cider vinegar or unsweetened nut milk. This activates enzymes that break down phytates, making them easier to digest.

Cook your oatmeal slowly and carefully using medium to low heat. The oats should be a little chewy when you eat them, not like baby food (all mushy).

Don't eat oatmeal every morning for breakfast. You might think that is healthy, but you need to rotate your foods. If the oatmeal isn't combined with enough protein, or it lacks B12, you might start your day with too many carbs and not enough fuel for the muscles or brain. Alternate with eggs, or avocado toast, or porridge, buckwheat pancakes, quiche, Greek yogurt with fruit and seeds.

You need protein with your oatmeal breakfast. Add a little Greek yogurt, some nuts, seeds, hardboiled or

softboiled egg. Carbs need protein to do their best work.

Take your time eating your oatmeal, slow down. If stressed, your digestive enzymes slow down, food doesn't get processed well even though you are eating healthy foods. Sit down, take a few deep breaths and eat calmly and slowly.

Oatmeal is not a perfect food. It is healthy, people often force themselves to eat it because they know it is a healthy food. Not everyone digests oats well. Listen to your body, how do you feel 1-2 hours after eating oats. Not the best food if on a keto diet. Careful if you have unstable blood sugar, epilepsy, irritable bowel.

If you can eat oats, the best way to eat oatmeal is to soak it 4-6 hours as mentioned; pair it with quality protein (eg. Boiled egg on the side, or silken tofu), and fats (eg. Few slices avocado, or a tsp almond butter, or a few walnuts). Sprinkle some cinnamon on top for flavour, use nut milk instead of regular milk, and a little chopped banana or apple for sweetener.