


Pop, Pop, Pop

Popcorn can be an incredibly healthy snack, but unfortunately it's often disparaged. When popcorn is in the news, it's usually the buttery, salty stuff you find at the movie theaters. A medium-sized container (that's 20 cups, by the way) at the theater contains a whopping 1,200 calories, 60 grams (g) saturated fat, and 980 milligrams sodium. But there is a bright side. An increasing number of pre-popped popcorn varieties are now available at your grocery store, and consuming an appropriate serving size of many such products can allow popcorn to be a healthy snack.

Helpful hints. Consider these tips when munching on pre-popped bagged popcorn.

- ▶ Serving size varies. A serving is usually one ounce. However, the amount you get in cups of popcorn per ounce may vary depending on the flavor. For example, cheese and caramel add weight and thus decrease the amount of popcorn you get in an ounce.
- ▶ Sweeties. It's not an issue in most varieties, but if you're munching kettle corn, sugar content can climb up to 4 teaspoons per serving. Choose those with lower amounts of sugar.
- ▶ Check the sodium. This nutrient varies the most in bagged popcorn, even in the sweet varieties. In fact, some popcorns contain almost 1/8th of your daily recommended amount of sodium in one serving. That's a lot for a snack.
- ▶ DIY it. You can easily make your own popcorn and control your toppings. Three cups of air-popped or stove-top (prepared with a tablespoon of vegetable oil) has 90-105 calories, 0-3 g fat, and no saturated fat or sodium. Try seasoning it with your favorite salt-free herbs and spices or a little parmesan cheese. If you can't skip the butter, a drizzle of 2 teaspoons melted over your popcorn will add 68 calories, 8 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, and negligible sodium. 

—Heidi McIndoo, MS, RD



Pre-popped Popcorn Nutritional Comparison

✓ = EN's Picks. As with all EN comparisons, this is only a sampling of products. Picks contain no more than 0.5 mg saturated fat (3% DV), 170 mg sodium (7% DV), and 11 g sugar.



PRE-POPPED POPCORN	Serv Size (c)	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carb (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
365 Organic Kettle Corn Popcorn	1 1/4	110	1.5	0	24	220	2	16	1
365 Organic Classic Salted Popcorn	3	140	8	0.5	16	190	3	0	3
✓ 365 Organic Reduced Fat & Sodium Popcorn	3 1/2	130	6	0.5	18	85	3	0	3
365 Organic White Cheddar Mini Popcorn	1 1/4	150	10	1.5	13	210	2	1	4
✓ Angie's Boom Chicka Pop Lightly Sweetened Popcorn	3 1/4	120	4	0	21	110	3	5	2
✓ Angie's Boom Chicka Pop Sea Salt Popcorn	4	140	7	0.5	19	130	4	0	3
✓ Angie's Boom Chicka Pop Sweet & Salty Kettle Corn	2	140	8	0.5	18	110	2	8	1
Angie's Boom Chicka Pop White Cheddar Popcorn	2 1/2	150	9	1.5	15	260	3	2	2
Chester's Popcorn, Butter	2 1/2	160	10	1.5	14	210	3	0	2
Chester's Popcorn Flamin' Hot	2 1/2	160	10	1.5	14	380	2	<1	3
Farmer Gene's Kettle Corn Popcorn	2	160	10	1	16	110	2	8	2
Farmer Gene's Sea Salt Popcorn	2	160	12	2	12	170	2	0	2
✓ Good Health Half Naked with Hint of Olive Oil Popcorn	5	120	3	0	21	140	4	0	3
✓ Little Lad's Herbal Corn Popcorn	3	160	4	0.5	21	140	4	0	4
Little Lad's Garlic Buttah Popcorn	3	160	8	2	17	95	2	0	3
Pipcorn Sea Salt Mini Popcorn	2 1/2	120	6	0.5	19	190	5	1	3
Pipcorn Truffle Mini Popcorn	2 1/2	120	6	0.5	19	190	5	1	3
Popcorn Indiana Aged White Cheddar Popcorn	2 1/2	150	9	1	14	290	2	2	2
✓ Popcorn Indiana Kettle Corn	2	130	5	0	21	130	2	9	1
Popcorn Indiana Sea Salt Mini Popcorn	3 1/2	130	6	0.5	17	220	3	0	3
Quinn Popcorn Kale & Sea Salt	4	150	10	1	15	170	3	0	2
Quinn Popcorn Made with Coconut Oil	4	140	9	7	15	170	3	0	3
Skinny Pop Mini Popcorn	3 1/4	150	10	1	15	75	3	0	2
Skinny Pop White Cheddar Mini Popcorn	3 1/2	150	9	1	15	95	2	0	2
✓ Smartfood Delight Sea Salt Popcorn	3 1/4	140	7	0.5	17	115	4	0	3
Smartfood Delight White Cheddar Popcorn	3 1/2	130	5	1	18	220	3	0	3
✓ Smartfood Sweet & Salty Kettle Corn	1 1/4	140	6	0.5	20	110	2	11	1
Smartfood White Cheddar Cheese Popcorn	1 1/4	160	10	2	14	290	2	2	3
✓ Stosh's Kettle Corn Popcorn	2	160	7	0	22	140	1	5	1
Trader Joe's Baconesque White Cheddar Popcorn	2	160	12	2	11	250	2	1	2
Trader Joe's Caramel Cheddar Popcorn Mix	1	170	9	3	23	240	1	14	2
✓ Trader Joe's Kettle Corn Popcorn	2	140	8	0.5	18	150	2	8	1
Trader Joe's Movie Theater Popcorn	2	160	11	1.5	15	200	2	0	2
Trader Joe's Organic Popcorn with Olive Oil	2	130	6	1	18	170	3	0	3
Trader Joe's Popcorn with Herbs & Spices	2	140	8	1	16	220	3	0	3
✓ Trader Joe's Reduced Guilt Air Popped Popcorn	2 1/2	110	3	0	20	60	4	0	3
Wise 50% Reduced Fat Butter Mini Popcorn	4	140	5	1	22	160	3	0	3
Wise Cinnabon Mini Popcorn	2	150	9	2	17	55	2	2	2
Wise White Cheddar Mini Popcorn	2	150	10	2.5	13	310	2	2	3
Wise Original Butter Mini Popcorn	3	150	10	2	14	280	3	0	1

Note: g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value, Daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: Food Labels and Product Websites. Note: all servings are approximately 1 oz