



NUTS CONSUMPTION - DO WE REALLY NEED ?

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Nuts are rich in nutrients, such as unsaturated fatty acids, fiber, vitamins, phenolic antioxidants, arginine, and other phytochemicals.^{1,2} The unique composition of nuts appears to be of paramount importance for their health effects.

Indeed, nuts have been found to be inversely associated with various cardiovascular disease (CVD) mediators, such as inflammation, oxidative stress, and endothelial dysfunction³. Nut consumption was also reported to be associated with a reduced risk of hypertension and diabetes mellitus.^{4,5} The consumption of nuts more than equal to three times per week was associated with an 18% reduced risk of atrial fibrillation.⁶

The beneficial effects of nuts may be summarized as below:

- Almonds help in lowering cholesterol and body fat.
- Pistachios help in lowering blood pressure under stress.
- Walnuts help keep arteries clear.⁷
- Cashews may reduce blood pressure and increase the levels of "good" HDL cholesterol.⁸
- Pecans can lower "bad" LDL cholesterol in people with normal cholesterol levels.⁹
- Hazelnut-rich diet may reduce total cholesterol, "bad" LDL cholesterol and triglycerides. It may lower markers of inflammation and improve blood vessel function.¹⁰
- Peanut consumption is found to be associated with a reduced risk of total mortality and death due to CVD .(technically not a nut, but a legume, like beans) ¹¹

The type of nuts you choose to eat probably doesn't matter much. Most nuts appear to be generally healthy, though some may have more heart-healthy nutrients than others. For example, walnuts contain high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids.¹²

PREvención con Dieta MEDiterránea(PREDIMED) randomized clinical trial of long-term nutrition intervention in subjects at high cardiovascular risk provided first-class evidence that regular nut consumption is associated with a 50 % reduction in incident diabetes and, more importantly, a 30 % reduction in CVD. Of note, incident stroke was reduced by nearly 50 % in participants allocated to a Mediterranean diet enriched with a daily serving of mixed nuts (15 g walnuts, 7.5 g almonds and 7.5 g hazelnuts). Thus, it is clear that frequent nut consumption has a beneficial effect on CVD risk that is likely to be mediated by salutary effects on intermediate risk factors.¹²

Nut oils are also a good source of healthy nutrients, but they lack the fiber found in whole nuts. Walnut oil is the highest in omega-3s fatty acids. Use of nut oils in homemade salad dressing or in cooking should be considered when cooking with nut

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oils, remember that they respond differently to heat than do vegetable oils. Nut oil, if overheated, can become bitter. Just like with nuts, use nut oil in moderation, as the oils are high in fat and calories.

Instead of eating foods with unhealthy saturated fats, try substituting **a handful of nuts or a tablespoon or two of a nut spread**. The American Heart Association recommends eating about **four servings of unsalted nuts a week. Select raw or dry-roasted nuts rather than those cooked in oil.**

A serving is a small handful (1.5 ounces) of whole nuts or 2 tablespoons of nut butter. But again, do this as part of a heart-healthy diet. Just eating nuts and not cutting back on saturated fats found in many dairy and meat products won't do your heart any good.¹³

In short eating nuts may help reduce risk factors for many chronic diseases, including heart disease & diabetes. But no one is better than other, each one has its own benefits, so it is better to take variety of nuts in certain amount (1.5ounce / 42grams) / day.

Keep in mind, you could end up canceling out the heart-healthy benefits of nuts if they're covered with chocolate, sugar or salt.

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