

Nuts pack nutritional benefits

December 24 2013, by Melissa Wdowik

Did you know that nuts may help you live longer?

This could come as a surprise, because nuts have an undeserved reputation of being junk food, but a recent Harvard study of more than 100,000 men and women found that people who eat nuts regularly, even daily, are less likely to die from heart disease, cancer and respiratory disease compared to those who do not. The study also found nut eaters were healthier overall, with lower rates of obesity, smaller waists, and [lower cholesterol](#) and [blood sugar levels](#).

According to this and other studies, the following can benefit from nuts in one's diet:

Brain function: Amino acids, vitamins and minerals found in nuts support blood flow to the brain to assist with cognitive tasks, especially as we age.

Heart health: Nuts contain both monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and raise HDL (good) cholesterol, and assist with heart rhythm and [blood flow](#).

Weight: Nuts contain high quality protein and fiber that both fill you up and keep you feeling full longer than foods without protein or fiber. This means the potential to eat less and less often.

Diabetes: Nuts have a [low glycemic index](#), and their protein and fiber help prevent spikes in [blood sugar](#) and the crashes that often follow

eating simple carbohydrates.

Diverticulosis: In the past, doctors recommended people with diverticulosis avoid nuts because it was thought they would lodge in the intestine and cause inflammation. Instead, current evidence shows the fiber in nuts helps speed digestion and keeps the intestines healthy.

Cancer and respiratory disease: Nuts are abundant in folate, niacin, vitamin E, potassium, calcium, magnesium and phytochemicals. These nutrients offer anti-inflammatory and antioxidant characteristics.

Given all these accolades, you may be tempted to start snacking on nuts by the handful, but a word of caution: they are high in calories, so eating too many can lead to weight gain, which would just counteract all their positives. So use nuts to replace other foods and limit them to about one ounce per day by using these suggestions, each given in one ounce serving sizes:

- 28 peanuts can take the place of tortilla chips
- 48 pistachios are a good substitute for potato chips
- 24 almonds make a nice trail mix combined with one-quarter of a cup of dried fruit
- 14 walnut halves taste great added to breakfast cereal
- 20 pecan halves are a delicious substitute for croutons on a tossed green salad
- 20 hazelnuts can be toasted and tossed with vegetables such as broccoli or green beans
- 18 cashews make a satisfying sweet snack in place of candy

When I was a child, we only had nuts in the house on holidays, so I will forever think of my mom's special cookies when I taste walnuts. Perhaps you have a similar memory that you can keep alive by enjoying the taste

and health benefits of [nuts](#) throughout the year.

Provided by Colorado State University

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