

Live Fit Nutrition: For Optimal Health

Going Nuts over Nuts

Heart Healthy Benefits

Incorporating nuts as part of a healthy diet is good for your heart. Many studies have shown that nuts can lower your LDL, or “bad” cholesterol level in the blood, improve the lining of your arteries, and reduce your risk of developing blood clots.

Nuts contain a variety of heart-healthy nutrients:

- ***Omega-3 fatty acids***-Omega-3’s help your heart by preventing dangerous heart rhythms that can lead to heart attacks. Nuts are rich in Omega-3 fatty acids and are one of the best plant-based sources.
- ***Unsaturated fats***-Nuts contain a lot of fat. However, they contain the “good” fats from monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which may lower bad cholesterol levels.
- ***Fiber***-Fiber has been shown to help lower your cholesterol. In addition, fiber makes you feel full, so you will eat less.
- ***Vitamin E***-May help to stop the development of plaque in your arteries which can lead to coronary artery disease or a heart attack.
- ***Plant Sterols***-Plant sterols occur naturally in some nuts and have been shown to help lower cholesterol levels.

Types of Nuts

Most nuts are generally healthy, though some more than others. Walnuts are one of the best-studied and contain high amounts of Omega-3 fatty acids. Other heart healthy nuts include almonds, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, and pecans. Nut oils are also a good source of Vitamin E and Omega-3s, but they lack the fiber found in whole nuts.

How Much Should I eat?

As much as 80 percent of the nut is fat. We know that this is a healthy fat, but they are still a large source of calories. Nuts should be eaten in moderation and should be a substitute for saturated fats, such as those found in meats, eggs, and dairy products. Current guidelines suggest eating 1-2 ounces of nuts per day. Keep in mind that if nuts are coated with chocolate, sugar, or salt it may cancel out the heart-healthy benefits of the nuts and increase calories.

Nutrition Tip

Substitute regular peanut butter with almond butter. It's a delicious alternative to the traditional PB & J sandwich! Almond butter is available in both crunchy and creamy varieties.

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To learn more about your nutritional needs and questions, purchase a 30 minute phone consultation with Alison at aozgur@comcast.net.