

# HEALTH BENEFITS OF NUTS

Nuts are an excellent source of protein, minerals (magnesium and zinc), “heart healthy” monounsaturated fats, vitamin E, folic acid, fiber, antioxidants and contain cholesterol-lowering compounds called plant sterols. Eating nuts daily has been shown to support heart and brain health, as well as, reduce the risk of death from cancer, heart disease, and respiratory diseases.<sup>1,2</sup>

Many studies using walnuts, almonds, pecans, pistachios, Brazil nuts, and hazelnuts have shown that diets containing nuts or nut butters decrease LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and increase HDL (“good”) cholesterol.<sup>1-3</sup> In addition, nuts like pistachios may help to lower blood pressure because they contain the amino acid arginine.<sup>4</sup> Certain nuts like cashews, pistachios, and almonds also contain tryptophan, an amino acid that stimulates the production of serotonin in the brain, which may reduce the risk of depression.<sup>5</sup>

While nuts are calorically dense, they also promote a feeling of fullness. In fact, several studies suggest that nuts are supportive of maintaining a healthy weight because of their protein, fiber, and healthy fat content.<sup>6,7</sup>

An ounce of nuts usually equals 160 to 180 calories. Sample amounts are approximately 45 pistachios, 20 almonds, 15 cashews, 18 hazelnuts, or 10 walnut halves. The best way to add nuts to your diet is to eat them instead of other processed foods that contain saturated or trans fats (e.g. chips, crackers, cookies, fast food).

## Here are some ways to add nuts into your diet:

- Use as a topping on hot or cold cereal
- Sprinkle almonds on top of yogurt
- Use nuts to replace croutons in salads or soups
- Sprinkle pine nuts on pasta
- Add slivered almonds to chicken salad
- Add pecans to quick breads such as pancakes, waffles, or muffins
- Make a cashew cream sauce in place of “alfredo” or other cream sauces
- Add hazelnuts to desserts
- Make a homemade trail mix, or buy one at the store
- Make nut balls for on-the-go snacks
- Opt for an unsweetened nut yogurt to replace dairy yogurt
- Add a serving of nuts to a smoothie
- Experiment with almond flour when baking



## References

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