

NUTRITION UPDATE

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NUTS & THEIR HEALTH BENEFITS

WHAT ARE NUTS?

A nut is dried fruit with one or two seeds in which the ovary wall becomes very hard (stony or woody) at maturity. Examples of nuts include almonds, pecans, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashew nuts, chestnuts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pine and pistachio nuts.

The term 'nut' is also applied to many seeds that are not botanically true nuts including cape seed, caraway, chia, flaxseed, linseed, passion fruit, poppy seed, pumpkin seed, sesame seed and sunflower seed.

DO NUTS PROVIDE NUTRIENTS?

Nuts are a good source of dietary fiber and provide a wide range of essential nutrients, including several B vitamins, vitamin E, calcium, iron, zinc, potassium and magnesium, antioxidants (including selenium, manganese and copper), phytochemicals (flavonoids) and plant sterols.

Nuts are also a rich source of mono saturated and poly saturated fats and most contain moderate amounts of proteins and carbohydrates in the form of natural sugars.

ARE ROASTED NUTS BETTER THAN RAW NUTS?

There is little difference in the nutrient content of roasted and raw nuts. However roasting may reduce the water content, thereby concentrating the nutrients and may also lead to a reduction in the quantity of several heat unstable B group vitamins.

ARE NUTS BENEFICIAL FOR HEALTH?

Although more research is required to ascertain the true advantages of nuts, preliminary studies have indicated that a daily intake of 30 grams of nuts is associated with the following health benefits:

- Better bone health.
- Decelerating the brain aging process.
- Reduction in the risk of cancer, gall stones and age related macular degeneration (which may lead to blindness).

Consuming a handful of nuts daily may reduce the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure and reduction in the risk of developing metabolic syndrome.

Healthy fat in nuts makes you feel fuller, thereby controlling your appetite and reducing the risk of obesity. In addition, nuts can also be a substitute for less healthy foods such as muffins, chips, chocolates and biscuits and others.

THE DAILY INTAKE QUANTITIES:

Following is the daily recommended quantity of a few popular varieties of nuts:

- 20 almonds
- 15 cashews
- 20 hazelnuts
- 15 macadamias
- 15 pecans
- 2 tablespoons of pine nuts
- 30 pistachio kernels
- 9 walnut kernels



References

<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/frequently-asked-questions/general-nutrition/nuts-and-health>