

NUTS!

Nuts protect against heart disease, control diabetes and help in weight loss, but only if eaten as raw or dry

RHYTHMA KAUL

Health benefits of a fistful of nuts :

- High levels of mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

- No cholesterol.

- Minerals such as magnesium, zinc, iron, calcium, copper, selenium and potassium.

- Phytochemicals, such as plant-estrogens (isoflavones) and phenolic compounds, ellagic acid and flavonoids.

- Vitamins E, B6, niacin and folic acid.

- Plant protein, which makes them a good alternative to meat; nuts are also high in the amino acid arginine.

- High dietary fibre.

Once shunned for being packed with fat and calories, nuts are back on healthy menus across the world. With nutritionists celebrating the health benefits of mono- and polyunsaturated fats found in most nuts, people are now being told to eat nuts not just to loose weight, but also to keep it off.

Research over the last some 20 years strongly suggests that everyone's diet should include nuts, even through 30 gm (roughly 1/4 cup) of unroasted nuts provides 157 to 204 calories and 13 to 22gm of fat. Adding two almonds servings (50 gm) a day to your diet has no effect on body weight, reported the *British Journal of Nutrition*.

Along with the heart-protecting benefits of almonds, walnuts, and peanuts, pistachios are now being studied for their health benefits on the Indian population.

Recently, a team of senior doctors in Delhi announced the start of a six-month study on the health benefits of pistachio on the Indian population. It has proven heart-protective benefits on populations across the world, with studies in the USA showing it is a healthy snacking option despite high calories because of its high fibre and good fat content.

Like other nuts, pistachio brings with it the benefit of its high good cholesterol (high density lipoprotein or HDL) and low bad cholesterol (LDL) content, which makes it a healthy replacement for artery-clogging snacks such as pakoras and namkeens.

A team of doctors led by heart surgeon Dr. Naresh Trehan, cardiologist, Dr Ravi Kasliwal and diabetes expert Dr Anoop Mishra study a small group of people divided into two small groups—one will include pistachio in their regular diet, while the other group will stick to their regular diet.

"These people have some or the other risk factor for heart disease and diabetes. Apart from glucose control, we'll be tracking cholesterol levels, C-reactive and lowering oxidative stress," says Dr. Mishra, diabetes and metabolism expert.

It's not just the heart protective benefits of pistachio that will be studied, but also its impact on weight loss and glucose control in people at the risk of diabetes.

A Harvard study had found that people lost more weight on a moderate-fat nut diet than on a low-fat diet. "Nuts help people stick to diets better than fat-free foods because they are high in fibre, which provides a feeling of satiety and discourages snacking," says Dr Mishra.

The mono-unsaturated fat in nuts, like the fat in olive oil, helps lower bad cholesterol without affecting the levels of heart-protecting good cholesterol. It also reduces C-reactive protein levels that are linked with inflammation and increased risk of heart disease, says Dr Kasliwal, senior cardiologist. Nuts should be eaten as raw or dry.

The more nuts you eat—up to half a cup a day—the greater is the drop in the bad cholesterol level. So, go nuts as soon as you can!

Conference

Discussion Meeting on Entomology Curriculum in Institutions of Higher Learning

(Chennai, Dec. 15-17, 2016)

This Meeting alongwith the First Prof. T. N. Ananthkrishnan Memorial Lecture 2016, to be delievered by Prof. M. S. Swaminathan, on 15th Dec 2016, will be held at the Madras Christian College, Tambaram, Chennai - 600 059.

To be organised by the Entomological Society of India; the Division of Entomology, I. A. R. I, New Delhi; Prof T. N. Ananthkrishnan Foundation, Chennai; and Deptt. of Zoology, Madras Christian College, Chennai.

For Registration fee and other particulars, contact :

Dr V. V. Ramamurthy,

Organising Secretary,

Division of Entomology,

Indian Agricultural Research Institute,

New Delhi - 110 012.