



The good news on nuts

They may be small, but they offer a surprising number of big health benefits

A handful a day can reduce your risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It will keep you feeling full for longer and help manage your weight. Sounds like hollow promises from the makers of the latest fad dietary supplement, right? Fortunately, in this case, the claims are all true — just 30 grams of nuts pack a powerful punch.

Almonds, walnuts, Brazil nuts and cashews, to name but a few, are part of a superstar lineup of nutritious tree nuts. They're a simple and easy source of vitamins, minerals and disease-fighting antioxidants and phytochemicals — all big contributors to helping you lead a long and healthy life.

According to Nuts for Life, an online resource funded in part by the tree nut industry and the Australian Government, a handful, or about 30g, of nuts delivers:

- Around 10% of daily adult fibre needs
- 20% of daily recommended dietary intake (RDI) of vitamin E, which helps fight disease
- 4g of protein
- 3g of non-haem iron (that's the type of iron that doesn't come from meat)
- A range of antioxidant minerals including magnesium and zinc
- Natural plant phytochemicals
- A healthy dose of so-called good monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats.

Why the 'bad boy' image?

Nuts taste good, offer a great crunch in a curry or a salad and are very easy to stash in a handbag. Despite this, the Australian Bureau of Statistics says that most Australians don't meet the recommended daily 30g serve of nuts.

Of course, some people are allergic to nuts, sending their immune system into overdrive. In extreme cases, this may cause difficulty breathing and/or the swelling of the tongue. A lot of negative associations are also around nuts being miscast as a fatty treat that should be avoided in exchange for low-fat foods. But that's not the case.

"Not all fats are the same," says Jean Hailes for Women's Health naturopath Sandra Villella. "There is a wide range of fats and nuts are a good, intact source of fat." Nuts are a wholefood that delivers fatty





An easy
tasty
snack

Nut trail mix

Instead of a biscuit barrel in the lunch room at work or in the kitchen at home, why not make up a fresh jar of nut-based trail mix.

What to put in your jar?

Here are Sandra Villella's tips for the nuts with the best nutritional benefits:

"Ensure that the nuts are fresh and raw," says Ms Villella. "The oils in nuts can go rancid if they're old and heat will destroy some of the healthy oils."

Include:

- **Almonds:** they're the best all-rounder of nuts, containing calcium and helping to lower LDL cholesterol (which reduces the risk of heart disease)
- **Brazil nuts:** rich in the disease-fighting antioxidant selenium, which is low in Australian soils
- **Walnuts:** rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which help prevent heart disease
- **Macadamia nuts:** rich in so-called healthy monounsaturated oils

Make nuts the biggest component of the trail mix jar, says Ms Villella, but for variety you can also add:

- Seeds like pepitas (pumpkin seeds) and sunflower seeds
- Red/purple dried fruit like goji berries, cranberries or raisins, which are rich in antioxidants
- Coconut flakes
- For those who like a little sweetness, add a few small dark chocolate chips

acids, says Ms Villella, which are an important source of fuel for the body as well as nutrients.

Studies show that regularly eating a handful of nuts does not lead to weight gain. In one recent small American study published in the *Journal of Nutrition*, a group of healthy adults regularly consumed 42g of walnuts. Tests showed that the calorie intake was around 20% less than previously thought. Similar results have emerged in studies on almonds and pistachios.

"A basic function is that it creates a feeling of satiety, basically feeling full for longer," says Ms Villella. "We then eat less overall."

Good for the heart

Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women in Australia. There are many steps we can take to reduce the risk of heart-related problems, like eating a handful of nuts a day.

In a big analysis of seven international studies involving more than 350,000 people, researchers found that around 30g of nuts a day helped reduce

risk of death from heart disease by a staggering 40%.

"Nuts are a good source of vegetable protein and plant sterols — plant sterols help to decrease the absorption of cholesterol," says Ms Villella. The nutrients in nuts help to keep down lipid levels in the blood. While the body needs a small amount of lipids, too much can cause fat deposits in arteries and can lead to heart disease.

It's just all about balance and moderation, says Ms Villella. "Combining a mix of raw and lightly roasted nuts will give you a great range of vitamins and minerals, some protein and good fats. And, even better, they're really tasty."

3 THINGS TO KNOW

1. Nuts contain lots of essential vitamins and minerals
2. A daily handful of nuts can help reduce the risk of heart disease
3. A small portion can keep you feeling fuller for longer, helping you to manage your weight



Download the recipe from
the Jean Hailes Kitchen