

# Go nuts for a healthy heart

Nuts often get a reputation as being unhealthy. We add them to cookies and ice cream. People eat them by the handful at parties. But do nuts deserve a bad rap?

## CONCERNS ABOUT CALORIES

For years, many people avoided nuts because they are high in calories and fat. However, newer research finds that nuts can be an important part of a healthy diet. They contain many nutrients needed for body functions.

The key is to eat nuts in moderation. This means you may need to eat smaller portions. Then, you can avoid eating too many calories from nuts.

Look at the serving size on a package of nuts to get an idea of how much to eat. One serving may be quite small (2-4 tablespoons).

## SOME FATS ARE HEALTHY

Yes, most nuts are high in total fat. But these fats found in nuts actually promote good health! Most are high in healthy monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats.

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats can help lower bad cholesterol, which can lower the risk of heart disease and stroke. The American Heart Association recommends people eat more of these fats from healthy sources like nuts and seeds.

## PROTEIN PACKED

Nuts are a good source of plant-based protein. Protein is an essential nutrient that the body needs for building muscle, repairing tissues and making hormones.

It takes longer for the body to digest proteins than carbohydrates. That's why eating some protein could help you feel less hungry than if you ate only carbohydrates, like crackers or bread.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that people eat healthy sources of protein, like those that come from nuts and seeds, and plant foods.

## WHICH TYPES TO EAT

Of course, there are many different kinds of nuts. Each type tastes different and may contain a variety of nutrients. As long as you're not coating nuts with sugar and salt, any type can be healthy.

Take a look at your favorite nut's nutrition facts and go from there. For instance, macadamia nuts are one of the highest in calories and fat per ounce. But take those calories into account, and eat them instead of chips or cookies.

Replace unhealthy, processed foods with nuts. You'll get more nutrients and might even feel more full.

