



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**September 22 2014**

### **NUTS: FOOD FOR THOUGHT, NEW SCIENTIFIC REVIEW**

A new Australian scientific review<sup>i</sup> of more than 70 studies has found that a daily handful (30g) of nuts may improve cognitive performance, which includes mental processes such as memory, problem solving and decision-making.

The study authors speculate that this may be due to the ability of nuts to improve blood flow.

Nuts were shown to improve the circulation of blood around the body as well as reducing blood pressure, improving blood glucose, reducing inflammation and helping blood vessel elasticity. Specifically, the review showed that nuts can reduce:

- inflammation markers by 6-12 per cent. Chronic inflammation is known to be a key early stage in the development of vascular disease,
- insulin levels by 14 per cent. High levels of insulin in the blood can cause insulin resistance, potentially resulting in weight gain and Type 2 diabetes.

Regular nut consumption also improved blood vessel elasticity by 20% on average.

Lisa Yates, Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian and Nuts for Life Program Manager says that this is yet again more science to add to the body of evidence supporting the health benefits of nuts.

"The review highlights that regular nut consumption may have a protective effect on blood vessel health and brain function. And, the benefits were even greater when a handful (30g) or more of nuts were eaten regularly over several weeks or longer.

"Eating a handful of nuts at least five times a week has also shown to reduce the risk of developing diabetes by 25%<sup>ii</sup> a disease associated with diminished cognitive function<sup>iii</sup>," added Ms Yates.

Dr Alison Coates, senior author of the review and Deputy Director of Nutritional Physiology Research Centre, University of South Australia said that more research is needed into the effect of nuts on cognitive function.

"As well as improving heart health, the impact of nuts on blood vessel function and reduced inflammation may also be associated with improved cognitive function.

"There are very few nut studies that look at cognitive function, with some finding improvements in memory, but this is an area where more research is needed."

Nuts are rich in nutrients that are thought to play an important role in cardiovascular health including monounsaturated fats, plant omega 3 ALA, amino acid arginine, folate, antioxidants: vitamin E, selenium, manganese, copper and polyphenols.

**Did you know?** Hypertension, diabetes, dementia and Alzheimer's disease can result from diminished brain function. More than 26.6 million people worldwide are believed to have



Alzheimer's disease, with this figure predicted to quadruple by 2050<sup>iv</sup>. This evidence suggested nuts may improve the performance of the brain so get cracking and chomping!

--ENDS--

For more information or to organise an interview with Accredited Practising Dietitian Lisa Yates or Dr Alison Coates please contact: Rachael Hoy at Bite Communications, 02 9977 8195 or 0416 400 737.

*Issued on behalf of Nuts For Life*

*Nuts for life is Australia's leading nutrition authority on tree nuts and health. The nutrition education initiative, funded by the Australian Tree Nut Industry and Horticulture Australia, aims to educate Australians about the nutrition and health benefits of regular tree nut consumption. Web - [www.nutsforlife.com.au](http://www.nutsforlife.com.au), Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/Nuts4Life> Twitter - @NutsForLife*

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<sup>i</sup> Barbour J.A., Howe P.R., Buckley J.D., Bryan J., Coates A.M., Nut Consumption for Vascular Health and Cognitive Function. *Nut Res Rev* 2014 Jun; 27(1): 131-58.

<sup>ii</sup> Jiang R et al Nut and peanut butter consumption and risk of type 2 diabetes in women. *JAMA*. 2002 Nov 27;288 (20):2554-60. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12444862>.

<sup>iii</sup> Cheng G, Huang C, Deng H, Wang H Diabetes as a risk factor for dementia and mild cognitive impairment: a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Intern Med J*. 2012 May; 42(5): 484-91.

<sup>iv</sup> Brookmeyer R, Johnson E, Ziegler-Graham K, et al. (2007). Forecasting the global burden of Alzheimer's disease. *Alzheimers Dement* 3, 186-191.