



## **Nuts: not only good for hearts but eyes and gut too**

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Scientific research has found that eating a handful of nuts each day can halve your risk of developing heart disease<sup>i</sup>, lower blood cholesterol<sup>ii</sup>, help control weight<sup>iii</sup> and act as a preventative measure against Type 2 diabetes<sup>iv</sup>. But further research into nature's own vitamin pills has found nuts to even benefit lesser known health conditions such as eye health, gallstones and gut health.

### **Nuts and eye health**

An Australian study found that eating nuts was a protective factor and reduced the risk of Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) in a group of older adults. AMD is the leading cause of blindness in Australia. The Blue Mountains Eye Study found that 1-2 serves of nuts a week (nuts are rich in 'healthy' unsaturated fatty acids) can reduce the risk of early AMD by 35% (relative risk, 0.65 [95% confidence interval, 0.47-0.91]). In this case a serving of nuts was equal to 20g or ½ a handful.<sup>v</sup> Fish intake was also found to be protective.

### **Nuts and gallstones**

Gallstone disease is a common source of illness in Western countries.

While certain risk factors for gallstones such as gender, age and genetics cannot be modified, the dietary intake of nuts has proven to be a protective factor.

Research conducted by the Harvard Medical School found:

- Men consuming a five or more units of nuts week (frequent consumption) had a significantly lower risk of gallstone disease (relative risk = 0.70, 95% confidence interval: 0.60, 0.86; p(trend) < 0.001) than did men who never ate or who ate less than 1 unit per month (rare consumption) (1 unit = 1 ounce or 28g or a handful ) of nuts).<sup>vi</sup>
- Women who consumed five or more units of nuts week (frequent consumption) had a significantly lower risk of cholecystectomy or surgical removal of the gall bladder (a standard treatment for gallstones) (relative risk: 0.75; 95% CI: 0.66, 0.85; P for trend < 0.0001) than did women who never ate nuts or who ate <1 unit per month (rare consumption)<sup>vii</sup> (1 unit = 1 oz or 28 g nuts)/wk

### **Nuts and gut health**

People with diverticular disease\* are often advised to avoid including nuts in their diet as it is thought to reduce the risk of these symptoms and complications. A study involving men published in the Journal of American Medical Association last year however found that there were no associations between nut consumption and diverticular bleeding or uncomplicated diverticulosis, and in fact reported an inverse association between nut consumption and the risk of diverticulitis.<sup>viii</sup> The researchers recommend that advice to exclude nuts from the diet to avoid diverticular complications should be reconsidered.

\*(a condition in which small pockets or out pouching of the bowel occur .These pockets or 'divertula' can be trouble free or can become inflamed and infected and cause uncomfortable digestive symptoms.)

It seems that as more research into nuts is conducted the more benefits to health are discovered, showing just how beneficial nuts are to health, truly nature's own vitamin pill and an important part of a healthy everyday diet. For the latest research, facts and delicious nut recipes for all occasions please visit [www.nutsforlife.com.au](http://www.nutsforlife.com.au)

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**For further information, please contact Porter Novelli Melbourne:**

Zoe Brown  
Phone: 03 9289 9555, Mobile: 0422 283 400  
Email: zbrown@porternovelli.com.au

Mandy Griffiths  
Phone: 03 9289 9555, Mobile: 0422 415 559  
Email: mgriffiths@porternovelli.com.au

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<sup>i</sup> Fraser, GE, Sabate J, Beeson WL, Stratham TM. A possible protective effect of nut consumption on risk of coronary heart disease *Arch Intern Med* 1992;152:1416-24

<sup>ii</sup> Tree nuts and the lipid profile: a review of clinical studies. Griel AE, Kris-Etherton PM. *Br J Nutr*. 2006 Nov;96 Suppl 2:S68-78.

<sup>iii</sup> J. Nut consumption and body weight. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2003 Sep;78 (3 Suppl): 647S-650S

<sup>iv</sup> Nut and peanut butter consumption and risk of type 2 diabetes in women. Jiang R, Manson JE, Stampfer MJ, Liu S, Willett WC, Hu FB. *JAMA*. 2002 Nov 27;288(20):2554-60.

<sup>v</sup> Tan JS, Wang JJ, Flood V, Mitchell P. Dietary fatty acids and the 10-year incidence of age-related macular degeneration: the Blue Mountains Eye Study. *Arch Ophthalmol*. 2009;127(5):656-65

<sup>vi</sup> Tsai CJ, Leitzmann MF, Hu FB, Willett WC, Giovannucci EL. A prospective cohort study of nut consumption and the risk of gallstone disease in men. *Am J Epidemiol*. 2004;160(10):961-8

<sup>vii</sup> Tsai CJ, Leitzmann MF, Hu FB, Willett WC, Giovannucci EL. Frequent nut consumption and decreased risk of cholecystectomy in women. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2004;80(1):76-81

<sup>viii</sup> Strate LL, Liu YL, Syngal S, Aldoori WH, Giovannucci EL. Nut, corn, and popcorn consumption and the incidence of diverticular disease. *JAMA*. 2008;300(8):907-14