



## Healthy hearts for life

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How do you halve your risk of getting heart disease? Go nuts!

Studies show that enjoying a handful of nuts (30g) five to seven times a week can halve your risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Even those who eat nuts once a week are less prone to heart disease than those who don't eat nuts at all.<sup>i</sup>

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in Australia, accounting for 34% of all deaths in Australia in 2006. CVD kills one Australian nearly every 10 minutes and is one of Australia's largest health problems.<sup>ii</sup>

The National Heart Foundation recommends snacking on plain, unsalted nuts as one way to help lower blood cholesterol levels and maintain a healthy heart.<sup>iii</sup>

Tree nuts such as almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts are essential eating as they are packed full of healthy fats, plant sterols, antioxidants, arginine, folate and fibre - all important for a healthy heart.

Chestnuts are different to other nuts – they are low in fat and have a low glycemic index (GI) which further helps to maintain a healthy heart.<sup>iv</sup>

Including nuts in a heart-healthy diet has been shown to enhance the cardio protective effects beyond merely lowering blood cholesterol levels. Nuts help hearts keep heart disease at bay in 5 easy ways:

- Healthy fats – the healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats including omega 3s help regulate blood cholesterol especially lowering LDL cholesterol – a risk factor for heart disease<sup>v</sup>
- Arginine – an amino acid and building block of protein, is a precursor to nitric oxide which helps relax the smooth muscles in blood vessels controlling blood pressure and preventing atherosclerosis<sup>vi</sup>
- Plant sterols – they lower cholesterol reabsorption from the gut causing more cholesterol to be excreted from the body<sup>vii</sup>
- Fibre – can also trap cholesterol in the gut and preventing it from being reabsorbed helping to lower blood cholesterol<sup>viii</sup>
- Antioxidants such as Vitamin E, magnesium, zinc, selenium and copper help prevent blood fats from oxidizing which increases inflammation, this improves the vascular reactivity associated with cardiovascular disease risk.<sup>ix</sup>

By incorporating nuts regularly into your diet you are not only helping your heart, but helping to boost your overall health too!

Some handy hints for including nuts in your diet include

- Sprinkle cashews or dry roasted almonds through an Asian stir fry or curry
- Crush hazelnuts or Brazil nuts and mix with breadcrumbs and your favourite herbs to make a crunchy topping for fish or chicken
- Puree hazelnuts or macadamias as an alternative to peanut butter
- Roast pine nuts and toss them through a salad or add pecans to hot veggies
- Mix chestnuts into your chicken stuffing
- Crush walnuts and sprinkle on top of your muesli or yoghurt
- Add chopped pistachios to your favourite pasta sauce
- Mix unsalted nuts with dried fruit for a healthy snack

For more research and delicious nut recipes for all occasions please visit  
[www.nutsforlife.com.au](http://www.nutsforlife.com.au)

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<sup>ii</sup> The National Heart Foundation website  
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<sup>vii</sup> Mukuddem-Petersen J, Oosthuizen W, Jerling JC A systematic review of the effects of nuts on bloodlipid profiles in humans. *J Nutr.* 2005 Sep; 135(9): 2082-9

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