



NEW HEALTH REPORT: A BIG FAT DIET MYTH BUSTED BY 20 YEARS OF SCIENCE

One of Australia's biggest diet myths – eating nuts makes you fat – has been busted by a new health report that for the first time reviews the past 20 years of scientific research on nuts and weight.

Released today, *The 2012 Nut Report: Nuts and the Big Fat Myth* reveals that the diet myth is so engrained in the Australian psyche it's the number one reason 98% of Australian don't eat the recommended 30g handful of nuts a day.

Surprisingly, health professionals are not immune to the myth with only 1% of general practitioners (GPs) and 4% of dietitians consuming the recommended daily intake of nuts. This is despite widespread understanding of their health benefits, with 93% of GPs and 99% of dietitians agreeing nuts play a role in reducing the risk of heart disease.

Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian and author of the report Ms Lisa Yates said the review confirmed nuts do not cause weight gain.

"Nuts are nutrient-dense and a rich source of good fats – mono and polyunsaturated fats. This has led to confusion and perpetuated the myth that eating nuts makes you gain weight. In fact the science shows the opposite is true," said Ms Yates.

"The review of research reveals nut eaters generally have a lower body mass index (BMI), a better diet, less risk of chronic disease and are less likely to gain weight than people who avoid eating nuts.

"To ensure more Australians gain the important health benefits of nuts, it is critical to bust the myth and once and for all confirm a handful of nuts a day does not cause weight gain and as part of an energy controlled diet, may help you lose weight.

"Nut consumption in Australia is so low that a report by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) states that Australian adults need to increase their nut consumption by 350% to be in line with the 30g serve recommendations.¹ "

Nuts and the Big Fat Myth analyses highly regarded population studies including the landmark Seventh-day Adventist study, Nurses' Health Study and the Physicians' Health Study, which followed more than 130,000 people in total, as well as more than 60 intervention studies including research on weight management in diets designed to achieve other health outcomes such as cholesterol lowering and diabetes management.

It follows a NHMRC review² of food health literature to help underpin the upcoming Australian Dietary Guidelines that determined: "consumption of nuts (65-110 g / day) does not lead to weight gain in the short-term".

The report was prepared by AAPD Lisa Yates in her role as dietitian for the Australian tree nuts industry's nutrition body, Nuts for Life, and includes a foreword by Weight Watchers.

Weight Watchers Australasia Director Martha Lourey-Bird welcomed the report and hoped the undisputable strength of the evidence would set the record straight.

"Once a slimmer's foe, nuts are well and truly back on the weight-loss menu," said Ms Lourey-Bird.

"A handful of nuts a day is a wise choice and one we encourage among our members. The high protein and dietary fibre content of nuts help keep you feeling full for longer and you also gain the benefits of superior nutrient density and healthy mono and polyunsaturated fats".

Nuts are a nutrient-rich whole food that are important to general wellbeing and chronic disease prevention, in particular heart disease and diabetes. Consuming a handful (30g) of nuts at least five times a week has been shown to reduce the risk of developing heart disease by 30-50%.

The report states nuts also play a significant role in weight management, prevention of long-term weight gain and as part of a healthy energy-controlled diet, nuts increase the chances of weight loss.

In addition to their high protein and fibre content helping to satisfy hunger, the fat in nuts aids weight management by releasing satiety hormones (such as cholecystokinin CCK) in the digestive system, increasing metabolism and nut eaters don't absorb all the fat in nuts -they excrete more fat compared to non-nut eaters.

Research also shows weight management diets including nuts are more successful as they have a higher level of compliance and greater longevity because they are considered more enjoyable.

For a copy of *The 2012 Nut Report: Nuts and The Big Fat Myth* including its 120 references or for more information on nuts and health please visit www.nutsforlife.com.au References for all statements in this media release are contained in the report.

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About the author: *Lisa Yates is an Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian with a Bachelor of Science and Masters of Nutrition and Dietetics. Lisa is a Board Director for the Dietitians Association of Australia, a columnist for Medical Observer, and in addition to her work with Nuts for Life and the Australian Tree Nut Industry, she consults to the Australian Avocado Industry and Horticulture Australia Limited.*

Issued on behalf of Nuts For Life, Australia's leading nutrition authority on tree nuts. 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.

**For more information and interviews please contact:
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Reference:

1. Australian Government NHMRC A Modelling System to inform the Revision of the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating report December 2011, NHMRC. www.eatforhealth.gov.au
2. Australian Government Department of Health and Aging and NHMRC A review of the evidence to address targeted questions to inform the revision of the Australian Dietary Guidelines Evidence statements Commonwealth of Australia 2011