



NUTS AND WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

More and more evidence is indicating that eating nuts regularly is unlikely to cause weight gain. In fact there is an increasing volume of research that suggests eating nuts regularly (30-60g/day) as part of a moderate fat, kilojoule controlled diet can in fact help to manage weight¹.

Recently published research papers help to dispel the belief that because nuts are energy dense and contain between 45-75 per cent fat (mainly unsaturated fats) they should not be eaten by individuals following a weight management plan.

A prospective study conducted by the Department of Nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health examined the role of nut consumption, long term body weight change, and obesity risk in a cohort of women from the Nurses' Health Study. Studying 51,188 women aged 20-45 years without a history of cardiovascular disease, diabetes or cancer between 1991 and 1999, the researchers found that women who ate nuts twice or more per week had slightly less mean weight gain than those who rarely ate nuts ($p < 0.001$). Results were similar when they reviewed normal weight, overweight and obese subjects. When lifestyle and other dietary factors were controlled for, consuming nuts more than twice a week compared with never/almost never was associated with a slightly lower risk of obesity (P for trend = 0.003). Researchers concluded nut consumption was not associated with greater body weight gain during 8 y of follow-up in healthy middle-aged women. Instead, it was associated with a slightly lower risk of weight gain and obesity.²

Hollis and Mattes (2008) researched the effect of consumption of almonds on body weight in healthy humans and found that adding almonds to the diet over a 10 week period did not cause weight gain. The study followed 20 healthy women who ate a 1440kJ serving (equivalent to approx. 55g) of almonds each day. Researchers found that the women reduced their energy intake while eating the almonds. This accounted for 74 per cent of the energy contributed by the nuts. An increase in energy expenditure and faecal fat excretion was also found³. These factors together with dietary compensation were found to account for 95-98 per cent of the daily energy intake.

There is an increasing body of evidence to suggest that nuts benefit gastric emptying, gut hormones and digestion to free fatty acids, plus the fibre in nuts is beneficial to weight loss regimes. Little *et al* measured the differences between triacylglycerides and free fatty acids on appetite and found that while free fatty acids do not leave the stomach as quickly, they stimulate plasma cholecystokinin and peptide-YY which suppress appetite⁴.

¹ Mattes RD, Kris-Etherton PM, Foster GD. Impact of peanuts and tree nuts on body weight and healthy weight loss in adults. *J Nutr.* 2008; 138: 1741S-1745S.

² Bes-Rastrollo, Hu, et al. Prospective study of nut consumption, long-term weight change and obesity risk in women. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2009; 89:1-7.

³ Hollis, J. and R. Mattes, Effect of chronic consumption of almonds on body weight in healthy humans. *Br J Nutr.* 2007;98(3):651-6.

⁴ Little TJ, Russo A, Meyer JH, Horowitz M, Smyth DR, Bellon M, Wishart JM, Jones KL, Feinle-Bisset C. Free fatty acids have more potent effects on gastric emptying, gut hormones, and appetite than triacylglycerides. *Gastroenterology.* 2007 Oct;133(4):1124-31.

Further to this the fibre found in nuts works as an appetite suppressant⁵ while also trapping some of the fat in nuts and excreting it from the body⁶.

In a nutshell, an increasing body of evidence supports eating a handful of nuts regularly as an important element to a healthy, balanced, weight management diet. Fear of nuts causing weight gain can be allayed as long as individuals avoid consuming too much energy overall, replacing unhealthy high saturated fat snacks with nuts and exercising regularly.

Practical Tip:

Snack on a handful of nuts in place of energy dense, nutrient poor snacks such as biscuits, cakes, pastries and fried snack foods.

For more information on the role of nuts in weight management and other health benefits of nuts, or for tasty recipes for all occasions, visit www.nutsforlife.com.au

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⁵ Jenkins DJ, Kendall CW, Popovich DG, Vidgen E, Mehling CC, Vuksan V, Ransom TP, Rao AV, Rosenberg-Zand R, Tariq N, Corey P, Jones PJ, Raeini M, Story JA, Furumoto EJ, Illingworth DR, Pappu AS, Connelly PW. [Effect of a very-high-fiber vegetable, fruit, and nut diet on serum lipids and colonic function](#). *Metabolism*. 2001;50(4):494-503.

⁶ Zemaitis J, Sabaté J. Effect of almond consumption on stool weight and stool fat. *FASEB J* 2001;15:A602 (abstr).