

NUTS FOR HEALTH

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Introduction

Nuts are one of the best plant sources of protein. They are rich in fibre, phytonutrients and antioxidants such as Vitamin E and selenium. Nuts are also high in plant sterols and fat - but mostly monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (omega 3 - good fats) which have all been shown to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol.

Studies have found that people who eat nuts regularly have lower risks of heart disease. In 1996, the "Iowa Women's Healthy Study" found that women who ate nuts, 4 times or more a week, were 40% less likely to die of heart disease. Two years later, another study, conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, found a similar result in another group of women subjects.

Furthermore, potential heart health benefits of nuts were also found among men.

In 2002, the Physician's Health Study found that men who consumed nuts, 2 or more times per week, had reduced risks of sudden cardiac death.

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Nuts for Health

London, July 16 /PRNewswire/

Nuts awarded first health claim of its kind in US

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the US today approved the first qualified health claim for conventional food, saying that eating one and a half ounces of most nuts, including almonds, may reduce the risk of heart disease when they're part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol.

The claim states: "Scientific evidence suggests but does not prove that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts, such as almonds, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease." (See nutrition information for fat content)

The claim is one of only six existing health claims relating to heart disease, and is the result of rigorous review of a large body of scientific research citing the heart health benefits of nuts. The claim is a result of a petition filed by the International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research and Education Foundation.

Studies supporting the heart health benefits of almonds were among the strongest submitted in the claim. One and a half ounces (42.5 grams) equals about one-third cup, or about 34 almonds.

The new health claim is a qualified one, which means that the FDA evaluated the data and determined that "though there is scientific evidence to support this claim, the evidence is not conclusive." This is the first qualified claim the FDA has issued on a conventional food, as part of its recently updated policy to offer qualified health claims on certain foods when it helps consumers understand potential health benefits.

Almond Board of California comments: "FDA's authorisation may come as a surprise to those who mistakenly believe nuts are a food to avoid. However, this claim is in line with recommendations from leading heart health organisations, such as the American Heart Association, which promote the substitution of foods high in saturated fats with those containing healthful, unsaturated fats such as the monounsaturated fats found in almonds."

The following table outlines the various element levels within 1.5 ounces (42.5 grams) of whole natural nuts

	Almond	Hazelnut	Pecan	Pistachio	Walnut	Peanut
Calories	246	267	294	237	278	241
Protein (g)	9.0	6.3	3.9	8.7	6.5	11
Total fat (g)	21	26	31	20	28	21
Dietary Fibre (g)	5	4	4.05	4.4	2.85	4
Calcium (mg)	105	48	30	45	42	39
Iron (mg)	1.8	2	1.1	1.8	1.25	2
Magnesium (mg)	117	69	51	51	68	71
Phosphorus (mg)	201	123	119	209	147	160
Potassium (mg)	309	290	174	437	188	300

	Almond	Hazelnut	Pecan	Pistachio	Walnut	Peanut
Vitamin E Alpha-tocopherol form (mg)	11	6.45	0.6	1	0.3	3.5
Saturated fat	1.6	2	2.7	2.25	2.6	3
Monounsaturated fat (g)	13.7	19.5	17.4	9.9	3.8	10.4
Polyunsaturated fat (g)	5.3	3.3	9.2	5.7	19.5	7
Cholesterol(mg)	0	0	0	0	0	0

(Source: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 15, August 2002)

The following nuts are included in the new claim: almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios, walnuts and peanuts.

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