

Nuts Can Reduce the Risk of Cardiovascular Disease

Small servings of nuts throughout your week can lower your risk of cardiovascular disease. Marta Guasch, a research fellow at the Harvard Department of Nutrition, reports findings that people who ate a handful of nuts equivalent to 28 grams five or more times a week were 14% percent less likely to develop cardiovascular disease and had a 20% lower risk of coronary disease. Properly sprouted nuts are a fantastic addition to a healthy diet and provide protein, fiber, b vitamins, and micronutrients like calcium, zinc, potassium, and magnesium in addition to their positive effect on the cardiovascular system.

The research from Harvard had three large studies with over 32 years of follow up to examine. The type of nut didn't really matter, as almost every type examined positively influenced the cardiovascular system with one exemption: peanut butter. As Guasch says,

We have observed benefits for total nuts, peanuts, tree nuts, and walnuts. They were all associated with lower risk of cardiovascular disease and coronary heart disease. And the intake of peanuts and walnuts was additionally associated with lower risk of stroke. However, what we observed was that peanut butter was not significantly associated with cardiovascular disease."

But There's a Catch

All of those fantastic nutrients are not readily available in your average store-bought nut. Nuts have enzyme inhibitors, of which phytic acid is the most well-known. Phytic acid binds to essential nutrients. All of the lovely calcium, iron, zinc,

and other nutrients in the beans are not available for the body to use. Phytic acid also inhibits enzymes like pepsin, amylase, and trypsin, causing the body to experience difficulties when digesting nuts.

The Steps

This does not mean you can't eat nuts and experience all that heart-healthy goodness. All you need is a little prep and a 12-24 hour waiting period.

1. First, purchase raw nuts whenever possible. The high protein content in nuts requires digestive enzymes, and roasted or processed nuts have had their enzymes destroyed by heat.
2. Take your raw nuts and soak them in warm, filtered water and a pinch of salt. The soaking time depends on the type of nuts, but it's a good idea to change the water halfway through the soaking process.
3. If you would like, you can soak the nuts for a longer period, then leave them out to sprout while they're still damp. Not all nuts sprout, so check to see the best amount of time to watch your particular nut. At this point, you have neutralized as many enzyme inhibitors as you likely will.
4. You are now free to dehydrate your nuts. The best way is with a dehydrator. Opinion is mixed as to the temperature you should choose for truly raw nuts, and most experts say 118 degrees Fahrenheit is the hottest possible setting. Wet foods are more susceptible to heat destruction though, so low and slow is your friend here. If you do not have a dehydrator, I suggest sun-drying (not much sun at the moment, but your mileage may vary). You can also use an oven on its lowest setting, though that will likely lead to loss of enzymes.

Check out *Stop Eating Like That and Start Eating Like This* –

Your Guide to Homeostasis Through Diet for everything you need to know about soaking and sprouting.

Embrace the Cliche

Now more than ever is the time to get your nut game tight. New year's resolutions (and society in general) are attempting to mold you into the kind of person who eats a handful of almonds for a snack. The kind of person who feels vindicated and righteous consuming their tiny, heart-healthy, protein-packed treat. And you can be that person who gets all of those nutrients without the crappy digestive issues. All you need is a little planning and a pitcher of salted water. Enjoy!

Sources:

- *Nuts and Heart Health* – Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health
- *Stop Eating Like That and Start Eating Like This – Your Guide to Homeostasis Through Diet* – Organic Lifestyle Magazine
- *Another reason you shouldn't go nuts on nuts* – chriskesser.com
- *At What Temperature Are Enzymes in Raw Food Destroyed?* – Calorie Bee