

# Nuts and weight management

Watching your weight? You can manage your weight and eat nuts too. Surprised?

Despite what many people believe, eating nuts regularly can actually help you maintain a healthy body weight. Nuts are a tasty food that people enjoy, helping you stick to your healthy eating plan for longer. The latest research suggests you can include nuts such as **almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, chestnuts, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts** in a successful slimming diet – and there are many other health benefits in doing so.



## Helping to control weight

Nut-eaters weigh less. Scientists recently reported the results of an eight-year study looking at the relationship between diet and health in more than 50,000 Nurses in the US<sup>1</sup>. They discovered that the women who ate more nuts, gained less weight. This is supported by several other large studies which suggest that people eating a handful of nuts five or more times a week do not weigh more than those who don't or never ate nuts<sup>2-7</sup>.

Clinical studies have also shown that people don't gain weight as expected when they add nuts to their diet<sup>8-9</sup>. One group of overweight adults added around 60g of almonds to their usual daily diet for ten weeks without any change in their weight<sup>10</sup>.

## Nuts have special slimming properties

There are many good reasons why you can enjoy around 30–50g or a handful of nuts every day as part of a slimming diet:

### Satisfying hunger & reducing appetite

The protein and fibre in nuts help to satisfy hunger and reduce appetite<sup>12-13</sup>.

Plus the fat content helps release satiety hormones in the digestive system which also help to curb hunger<sup>14-16</sup>. Eating a snack of nuts can mean you have less desire to overeat later in the day, helping to reduce your overall daily kilojoule intake<sup>18</sup>.

### Fewer kilojoules absorbed

As a wholefood with lots of fibre, the digestion and absorption of the energy in nuts is likely to be incomplete. It's estimated that you don't absorb between 5% and 15% of the energy in nuts. This is because some of the fat in nuts passes through your system trapped in the nuts' fibrous structure<sup>16-19</sup>.

### Increased energy expenditure

The physical effort the body uses to digest nuts may result in an increase in energy expenditure, estimated to be around 10% of the energy the nuts contain<sup>18</sup>.

### Low glycemic index effect

When mixed with foods rich in carbohydrate nuts can slow the digestion of the meal resulting in a slower rise in blood glucose. This can help to satisfy appetite for longer<sup>21-22</sup>.

## Improving insulin sensitivity

Diets high in saturated and trans fat have been linked to an increased risk of insulin resistance. Insulin resistance can lead to weight gain. However, diets rich in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats appear to improve insulin sensitivity<sup>23</sup>. Nuts are rich in these healthy fats.

For all these reasons, plus their ability to enhance metabolic health<sup>24</sup>, nuts are a positive addition to a healthy eating pattern for managing your weight.

## How much and how often?

Enjoying 30–50g or a handful of nuts most days a week has maximum benefits for general health. To make managing your weight easier, swap poor food choices such as biscuits, cakes, pastries and fried snack foods for a health-boosting snack of nuts and fruit.

Nuts are nutrient dense with a wide variety of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants just like other plants foods – fruit and veg. For good health we need two serves of fruit and five of vegetables each day – so remember 2 + 5 + a handful of nuts, every day.

## Tips for including nuts daily

- Snack on plain, unsalted nuts throughout the day
- Sprinkle almonds or cashews through a stir fry.
- Roast chestnuts or pine nuts and toss them through a salad.
- Sprinkle crushed roasted hazelnuts onto a warming soup for winter.
- Crumble macadamias or pistachios onto grilled fish
- Crush pecans or walnuts over low-fat yoghurt and fruit.
- Sprinkle a handful of chopped nuts over a wholegrain breakfast cereal.
- Use a pure nut spread (eg almond or Brazil nut spread) on toast in place of butter or margarine.

For further information on nuts and health refer to [www.nutsforlife.com.au](http://www.nutsforlife.com.au) email [admin@nutsforlife.com.au](mailto:admin@nutsforlife.com.au) or phone **02 9460 0111**

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## Why low-fat diets don't keep the weight off

The low-fat mantra of the 80s and 90s is a thing of the past. A moderate-fat diet may keep the weight off for longer.

Research shows that when people lose weight, only 14% keep their weight off in the long term. One of the reasons may be that traditional low-fat, high-carbohydrate diets often recommended for weight loss are not as appetising as other styles of eating.

One study tested the idea that by including moderate amounts of foods high in healthy fats in a weight-loss diet, people would enjoy their food more and would stick to their diet for longer. The results of the study showed that this was the case. After 18 months, people who followed the moderate-fat, low-kilojoule, Mediterranean-style diet, lost more weight than people on the traditional low-fat, low-kilojoule diet. In fact, the people on the low-fat diet actually gained an average of 2.9kg. The researchers reported that because the moderate-fat diet included foods like nuts, peanut butter and olive oil, the diet was tastier and made it easier to stick to in the long term<sup>11</sup>.

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