



Oswego County Opportunities, Inc.

Nutrition Services

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Let's Go Nuts!

Often overlooked as a potential “super food”, nuts are tiny little powerhouses of nutrition. Nuts are an excellent source of plant-based protein and healthy fats, and also contain dietary fiber and a wide range of vitamins and minerals (including B vitamins, vitamin E, calcium, iron, zinc, potassium, magnesium, selenium and copper). Nuts also contain antioxidant compounds, such as plant sterols and flavonoids which can help in preventing chronic diseases. Because nuts are so high in protein, they can be eaten as a healthy, often inexpensive alternative to meat in dishes or snacks. This can be helpful to those trying to follow a vegetarian diet.

The healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in nuts have cholesterol lowering ability and may help in maintaining low blood pressure. There is even some research suggesting eating nuts regularly may help lower the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes! According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease. The optimal nuts for these health benefits are: almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, some pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts — which contain less than 4 grams of saturated fat per serving. Just be sure you are purchasing low-sodium or salt-free versions in order to have the optimum health benefits.

The combination of fiber, protein and fat in nuts also helps make you feel full longer, making them an excellent option for weight management. One thing you must be careful with however is **PORTION SIZE**. While nuts are healthy, they are calorie-dense. Nuts range from 160 calories to 200 calories per ounce. To get their health benefits without breaking the calorie bank, it's best to eat nuts in place of other high calorie snacks (such as potato chips, cookies, crackers, candy, ice cream, etc.). Each type of nut has its own unique blend of taste and nutrition properties. Here are some brief facts about common types of nuts consumed in America:

- **Peanuts:** Technically not a nut, peanuts actually belong to the legume family and are therefore related to beans, lentils, and soy. They are still high in protein, healthy fats and many vitamins and minerals.
- **Pistachios:** Contain antioxidants, including lutein and zeaxanthin. Their bright color makes for great addition to salads, grain dishes and as a coating for meats.
- **Almonds:** Excellent source of vitamin E and magnesium, also provides calcium and folate. Can be used whole, sliced, blanched to remove skins, and as flour, paste or butter.
- **Cashews:** Excellent source of copper and magnesium. Soft consistency with delicate, sweet flavor.
- **Hazelnuts:** Also known as filberts, they are rich in healthy fats and an excellent source of vitamin E, copper and manganese. Available in-shell, whole, diced/sliced and as a paste in gluten-free baking.
- **Pecans:** Rich in antioxidants and heart-healthy monounsaturated fats. Sweet, mellow flavor does well in a variety of dishes, including salads, as a coating for fish, and in sweets such as pralines and pecan pie.
- **Walnuts:** Rich in antioxidants and an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids. Grooves hold onto flavors well and are delicious when seasoned sweet or hot. Oil can be used in dressings and sautés.
- **Macadamia Nuts:** This nut is high in fat, but 17 of the 22 grams are monounsaturated. Excellent source of manganese. Unique rich, buttery taste and smooth texture lends to eating as a snack raw or roasted.

Don't forget that nut butters are excellent sources of nutrients too (peanut butter, almond butter, etc.). If you cannot consume whole nuts because of chewing difficulty or medical reasons (such as diverticulosis), nut butters are a great choice. Contact your Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist, Chaya Charles for any further nutrition questions you may have.