



N is for Nuts!

Presented by the Dietitians at Froedtert & Community Memorial Hospitals

You may have heard that nuts are good for you. You may have also heard they help reduce the risks of heart disease and diabetes and help control weight. The FDA has made it official: Eating about 1.5 ounces a day (about a handful or 1/3 cup) of certain nuts can reduce your risk of heart disease—provided you watch the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol you consume. This claim will now appear on select packages of nuts.

Nuts are actually much more nourishing than most snacks. These tiny little packages contain high protein (usually >10% of their calories are from protein), rich in potassium, and relatively high in iron. Their oil-rich kernels are one of the best vegetable sources of Vitamin E & B Vitamins. They also contain good amounts of magnesium, zinc, copper, and selenium. On top of all that good stuff, they are a good source of fiber (fiber from nuts has been shown to lower cholesterol levels).

But dieters have avoided nuts due to their fat content – most nuts have 75 – 90% of their calories from fat. Bad fats that pose health problems come primarily from saturated and trans fats, neither of which are found in most nuts. Instead, most nuts are loaded with good fats -- monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Some nuts, such as walnuts, boast a rich source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, similar to salmon.

Which nuts qualify?? Almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, pistachios, and walnuts, as well as some foods made from them. When you add nuts to your diet, you add the health benefits but you also add calories. Nuts are high in calories—about 260 calories per handful.

To avoid overdoing it:

- Pre-portion nuts in small bags -- a great snack to take on the go or to the office.
- Choose nuts in the shell; you will probably eat fewer since it takes time to crack them.
- Take a handful and put the package away before you start munching.
- Sprinkle nuts on a soup or salad instead of croutons or cheese.
- Snack on nuts instead of pretzels or chips.
- Top yogurt with nuts instead of granola.

Nut Countdown

How many nuts (and calories) make up a heart-healthy 1.5 ounces, or about 1/3 cup? Here's an estimate from the Tree Nut Council:

70 shelled pistachios CALORIE COUNT: 240	30 almonds CALORIE COUNT 240
42 large peanuts CALORIE COUNT 255	27 hazelnuts CALORIE COUNT 270
27 pecans CALORIE COUNT 300	17 walnut halves CALORIE COUNT 285

