

Nation's Leading Nutrition Researchers Promote Two New Studies Linking Tree Nut Consumption to Overall Health Benefits

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Summary:The primary finding of the studies found that snacking on nuts, including pistachios, continues to show significant positive health benefits, from long-term improved control of blood sugar and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol in people with type 2 diabetes to overall improved diet quality and weight control.

27 Apr 2010 --- New information, unveiled by leading nutrition researchers, promotes the various health benefits of eating tree nuts – such as pistachios – on a regular basis. Two studies, funded by the International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research & Education Foundation, were highlighted at the 2010 Experimental Biology meeting, April 24-28, to a group of nearly 13,000 scientists and exhibitors. The primary finding of the studies found that snacking on nuts, including pistachios, continues to show significant positive health benefits, from long-term improved control of blood sugar and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol in people with type 2 diabetes to overall improved diet quality and weight control.

"The pistachio industry continues to support ongoing research about the many benefits of incorporating nuts into a healthy lifestyle and we have long known tree nuts to have a positive effect on the American diet," said Dr. Constance Geiger, nutrition expert for the Western Pistachio Association (WPA) and its nutrition education Web site, TheGreenNut.org. "This new information presented at Experimental Biology meeting further shows that people who eat nuts, such as pistachios, are healthier overall and have a lower risk for certain chronic diseases."

Type 2 Diabetes Risk Factors and Snack Nuts

Yesterday, Dr. Cyril CW Kendall revealed a promising new study titled "Effects of nuts on glycemic control and coronary heart disease risk factors in type 2 diabetes," which shows adding tree nuts, such as pistachios, to the diet promotes long-term blood sugar control and reduces blood lipids (such as bad cholesterol) -- both risk factors for heart disease in people with type 2 diabetes.

Findings demonstrate that for those with type 2 diabetes, the addition of 75 grams (a little more than 2.5 ounces) of nuts to their diets, significantly lowered HbA1c (P=0.039), a long-term measure of blood glucose, total cholesterol and LDL (bad)-cholesterol. These diets also showed lower ratios of total-cholesterol: HDL-C, and LDL-C:HDL-C (good cholesterol). These findings indicate that good cholesterol was increased, while total and bad cholesterol were lowered.

Led by Dr. Kendall from the Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto, Clinical Nutrition & Risk Factor Modification Centre, St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, ON, Canada, these new results further link tree nuts to diabetes prevention and management.

Snack Nuts Play Integral Part In A Healthy Diet

Tomorrow, Dr. Victor Fulgoni will present "Measures of Diet and Their Association with Health Outcomes I" – detailing the new study he led titled, "Improved diet quality, nutrient intake, and health associated with out-of-hand tree nut consumption in U.S. Adults: NHANES 1999-2004." This study shows the association between snacking on nuts, including pistachios, with higher overall diet quality, improved nutrient intakes, and lower prevalence of health risks in adults age 19 years and older.

Measured using the Healthy Eating Index-2005, tree nut consumers had improved diet quality and significantly higher intakes of adult shortfall nutrients including fiber, vitamin E, magnesium, and potassium with lower sodium intake – nutrients all found in pistachios. Additionally, body mass index, waist circumference and the prevalence of hypertension, low HDL-C, and metabolic syndrome, which can lead to type 2 diabetes, were lower in consumers as compared to non-consumers.

Tree nut consumption was defined as an intake of at least a quarter ounce of tree nuts eaten out-of-hand, and did not include tree nuts contained in cereals or other foods.

Research Articles

The first research abstract referenced in this press release is titled, "Effects of nuts on glycemic control and coronary heart disease risk factors in type 2 diabetes" and co-authored by Cyril WC Kendall, Amin Esfahani, Tina L Parker, Monica S Banach, Sandra Mitchell, David JA Jenkins from the Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada, (2)Clinical Nutrition & Risk Factor Modification Centre, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, ON, Canada.

The second is titled, "Improved diet quality, nutrient intake, and health associated with out-of-hand tree nut consumption in U.S. Adults: NHANES 1999-2004," and co-authored by Victor L Fulgoni, III, Carol E O'Neil, Debra R Keast, Theresa A Nicklas from Nutrition Impact, LLC, Battle Creek, Mich., Ag Center, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, La., Food & Nutrition Database Research, Inc., Okemos, Mich., Department of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine, USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center, Houston, Texas.

Pistachios Facts

Pistachios are a naturally cholesterol-free snack that contains just 1.5 grams of saturated fat and 13 grams of fat, the majority of which comes from monounsaturated fat. A one-ounce serving of pistachios equals 49 nuts, which is more nuts per serving than any other snack nut. One serving of pistachios has as much potassium (300mg, 8 percent) as an orange (250mg, 7 percent), making it a nutritious snack choice or ingredient to incorporate into daily diets.