

8 Nuts That Are Crazy-Good for Your Health

Why You Should Go Nuts for Nuts

If nuts aren't in your regular snack rotation, you're missing out on major disease-fighting nutrients that protect your heart, boost brainpower, and more.

By Rachel Grumman Bender



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Nuts are underrated as nutritious snacks — and walnuts may get the shortest shrift of the bunch. New research has crowned the walnut the healthiest nut, with almost twice as many heart-healthy antioxidants as other kinds. But even though walnuts may be king, all nuts boast powerful nutrients that can promote **weight loss**, boost heart health, power down PMS, and even lower cancer risk. Unfortunately, too few Americans eat nuts regularly: They account for less than eight percent of daily antioxidant intake. "That may be because people are afraid of the fat and calories in nuts, or they find plain nuts boring," says **Joy Bauer**, *Today Show* nutritionist and bestselling author. "That's a shame, because a small handful can pack your diet with filling protein, fiber, unsaturated fats, and important vitamins and minerals." Here's how your health benefits each time you dip into that dish on your coffee table:

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Walnuts: Inflammation Fighters

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In addition to containing the most antioxidants of all nuts, which help protect your body from the cellular damage that contributes to heart disease, cancer, and premature aging, "walnuts are also the richest in omega-3 fatty acids, which fight inflammation," says Bauer. They're an especially great way to get these healthy unsaturated fats if you're not a fan of fish, where

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these types of fats are predominantly found. A walnut snack may also turn around a bad day during that time of the month: The manganese they contain may reduce **PMS** symptoms.

Serving info: About 14 walnut halves = 185 calories, 18 grams fat

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Almonds: Good for Your Gut

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Almonds contain the most **fiber** — about three grams per ounce — compared to other nuts, and are richest in vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant. Almonds may even help you slip into those skinny jeans: In one *International Journal of Obesity* study, when two groups of obese adults followed low-calorie diets for six months, those who included almonds in their weight loss plans lost more weight than those who ate more complex carbohydrates. Other research shows that almonds are especially healthy for people worried about their blood sugar: Those who ate about 20 percent of their calories from almonds for four months saw their bad LDL cholesterol drop and their insulin resistance decrease compared to a control group who didn't eat them. Almonds may even safeguard your gut: A test-tube study (funded by the Almond Board of California) found that the nuts raised levels of good bacteria that bolster the body's immune system.

Serving info: About 23 nuts = 170 calories, 15 grams fat

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Cashews: Brainpower Boosters

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Cashews are particularly rich in iron and **zinc**. "Iron helps deliver oxygen to all of your cells, which can prevent anemia, and zinc is critical to

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immune health and healthy vision," says Bauer. Cashews are also a good source of magnesium: One ounce provides almost 25 percent of your daily need. Magnesium may help improve memory and protect against age-related memory loss, according to a study in the journal *Neuron*.

Serving info: about 18 nuts = 165 calories, 13 grams fat

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Pecans: Artery Defenders

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Pecans aren't just for making tasty pies, they can also help improve your [heart health](#).

"Pecans are among the most antioxidant-rich nuts," says Bauer. "They may help prevent plaque formation in your arteries." In fact, a *Journal of Nutrition* study (funded partly by the National Pecan Shellers Association) found that consuming pecans can help lower LDL cholesterol levels by as much as 33 percent. Pecans may also buffer your brain health, according to an animal study from the University of Massachusetts Lowell. The vitamin E found in the nuts could delay progression of degenerative neurological diseases like amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Serving info: About 18 halves = 200 calories, 21 grams fat

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Brazil Nuts: Potent Cancer Protector

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Just one Brazil nut packs more than 100 percent of the daily value for the mineral selenium, which may help prevent certain [cancers](#), including bone, prostate, and breast cancer. A recent study in the *Journal of Medicinal Food* suggests that the selenium found in Brazil nuts, along with soy, may help



fight prostate cancer by inhibiting the growth of cancerous cells. However, don't overdo it on Brazil nuts: High levels of selenium can be harmful, so stick to a serving or less.

Serving info: 5 to 6 nuts = 185 cal, 18 grams fat

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Macadamia Nuts: The Most MUFAs

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Although ounce for ounce they're one of the most **calorie**-dense nuts, macadamia nuts contain the greatest amount of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat (MUFA) per serving. "This 'good fat' lowers LDL 'bad' cholesterol levels and blood pressure," says Bauer. A Pennsylvania State University study (funded partly by the Hershey Company, which owns the Mauna Loa Macademia company) found that people who added macadamia nuts to their diets reduced their triglyceride levels, total cholesterol, and LDL cholesterol by nearly 10 percent.

Serving info: About 10 nuts = 200 cal, 22 grams fat

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Pistachios: The Skinniest Nut

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Pistachios are the most slimming nuts, with less than four calories each. Their shells make them especially dieting-friendly: "Eating them in the shell automatically slows down your pace so the snack lasts longer and you eat less overall," says Bauer. They may also help you breathe easier: University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center researchers found that eating two ounces of pistachios daily may reduce **lung cancer risk**. Pistachios are rich in the



antioxidant gamma-tocopherol, a form of cancer-fighting vitamin E. Pistachios are also packed with potassium, a mineral essential for a healthy nervous system and muscles, and are a good source of vitamin B6, which can lift your mood, fortify your immune system, and more.

Serving info: About 50 nuts = 160 cal, 14 grams fat

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An all-around healthy nut, hazelnuts are notable for their high levels of monounsaturated fats, which can improve cardiovascular health and help to manage [type 2 diabetes](#), according to Bauer. They're also rich in the antioxidant vitamin E, which may prevent cataracts and macular degeneration, maintain healthy skin, and reduce risk of dementia.

Serving info: About 21 nuts = 180 cal, 17 grams fat

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