

Healthy Diet



Dulcimer Medical Center values working one-on-one with patients to help them reach optimal health. A healthy diet is a vital part of this, and as you'll read in Dr. Parnell's article... nuts can be a healthy diet choice. Call Dulcimer Medical Center today to schedule your appointment.

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Nuts to You!

Most women I talk with in the office are concerned about healthy eating. They pay attention to nutrition facts on food labels and are particular about the recipes they choose. They are thankful for healthy choices on the menus when they eat out. Some are careful due to medical conditions – diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol – where careful food choices improve their health. Quite a few others are concerned about how diet might affect their weight. As women consider their options they often don't consider nuts as part of a healthy diet.

Several studies in recent years have shown the health benefits of nuts:

- The Nurses Health Study found that women who ate five ounces of nuts per week reduced their risk of dying from heart disease by 35 percent. The researchers also noted that the nurses who were nut-eaters tended to weigh less than the nurses who did not eat nuts.
- In the Iowa Women's Health Study, women who ate nuts or seeds more than four times per week were 40 percent less likely to die of coronary heart disease than similar women who didn't eat nuts.
- The 31,000 Seventh-Day Adventists who ate nuts more than four times a week were half as likely to die of a heart attack as those who ate nuts less than once a week.
- In the Physicians' Health Study, men who ate nuts at least twice a week had half the rate of sudden cardiac death as men who rarely or never ate nuts.
- A study in the medical journal *Circulation* reported that when walnuts were substituted for about one third of the calories supplied by olives and other monounsaturated fats, the elasticity of the arteries increased by 64 percent and the levels of molecules that cause cells to adhere to the vessel walls were reduced. This would reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Nuts are excellent sources of protein, minerals (magnesium and copper), "good" monounsaturated fats, vitamin E, folic acid, fiber and naturally occurring cholesterol-lowering compounds called plant sterols. Many studies using peanuts, walnuts, almonds, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachios and hazel nuts showed that diets containing nuts or nut butters lowered LDL cholesterol (the harmful cholesterol) by 10 to 15 points. In addition nuts may help dilate blood vessels due to the presence of the amino acid arginine, which may help to lower blood pressure levels. The vitamin E in nuts helps prevent oxidation of cholesterol, which leads to

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By Steven E. Parnell • Photo by Jeff Silker

fatty build up in the arteries. Folate lowers homocysteine levels in the blood which reduces heart disease. Calcium, magnesium and potassium in nuts lower blood pressure.

The same fat and protein in nuts that help to protect your heart also fight cancer. Beta-sitosterol, one of the phytosterols in nuts, can suppress breast cancer and prostate tumors.

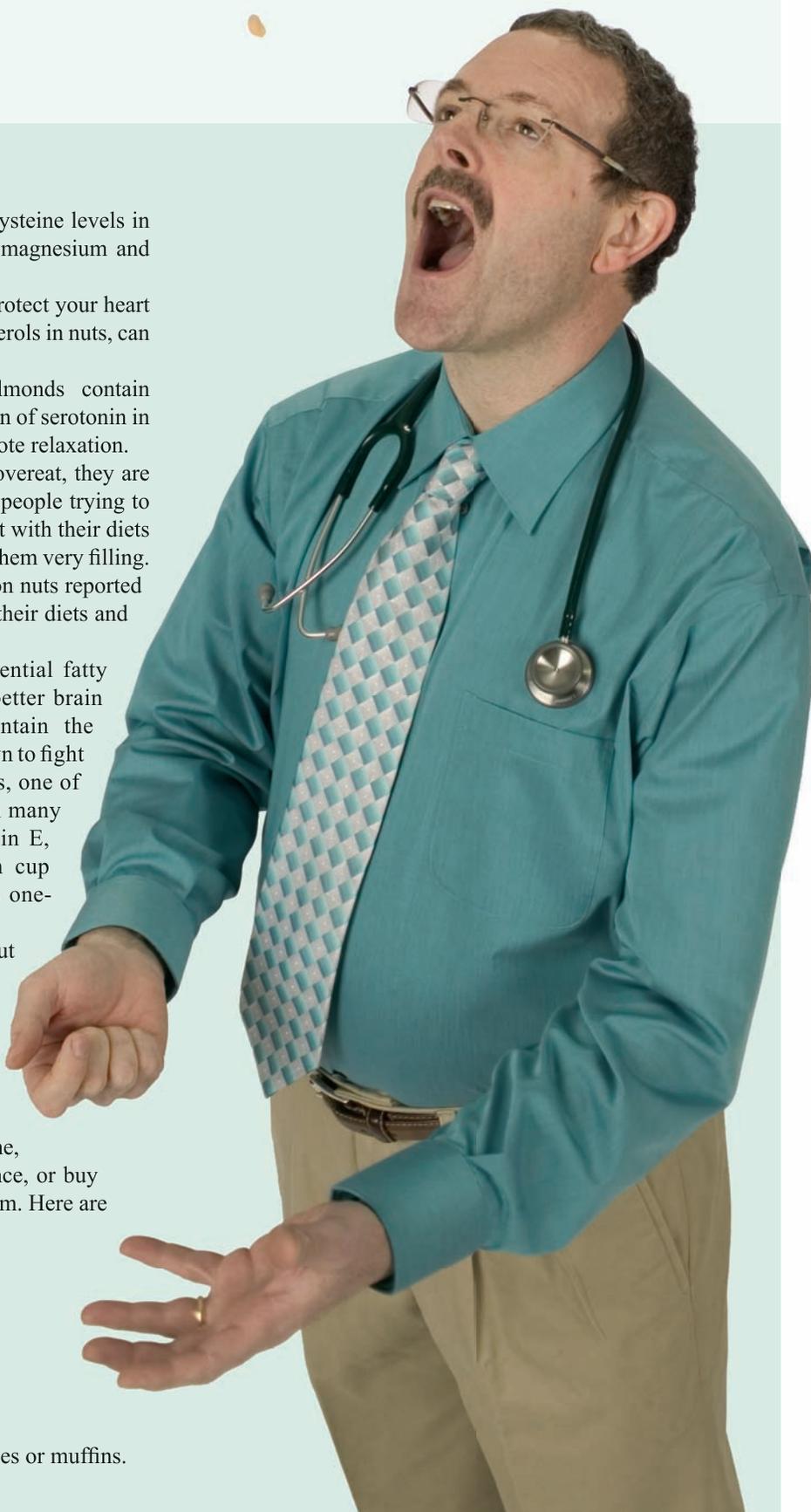
Certain nuts like pecans, walnuts and almonds contain tryptophan, an amino acid that stimulates production of serotonin in the brain, which can improve depression and promote relaxation.

While nuts are calorically dense and easy to overeat, they are also a satisfying snack. It has been suggested that people trying to lose weight who eat nuts tend to be more compliant with their diets because the fat and fiber content of the nuts makes them very filling. Studies have shown that dieters allowed to snack on nuts reported that they weren't as hungry. They felt good about their diets and tended to eat healthier food.

Walnuts are a great source of omega-3 essential fatty acids, which are heart protective and promote better brain function. They are anti-inflammatory and contain the antioxidant compound ellagic acid, which is known to fight cancer and support the immune system. Almonds, one of the best nuts for lowering cholesterol, are rich in many nutrients: potassium, manganese, copper, vitamin E, selenium, magnesium and calcium. One-fourth cup of almonds contains almost as much calcium as one-fourth cup of milk.

An ounce of nuts is usually equal to about 170-180 calories. Sample amounts of nuts are approximately 20 almonds, 15 cashews, 18 hazelnuts, or 10 walnut halves. The best way to add nuts to your diet is to eat them instead of other foods, especially ones that contain heart-damaging fat (cakes, cookies, chips, etc). Portion control is the key. Eat nuts slowly, one at a time, rather than throwing them all in your mouth at once, or buy nuts in the shell so it will take you longer to eat them. Here are some ways to add healthy nuts to your diet:

- Top hot or cold cereal with nuts.
- Sprinkle almonds on top of yogurt.
- Add nuts to your salads.
- Use nuts to replace croutons in salads or soups.
- Sprinkle pine nuts on pasta.
- Add slivered almonds to chicken salad.
- Add nuts to quick breads such as pancakes, waffles or muffins.
- Add a handful of nuts to steamed vegetables. ▶



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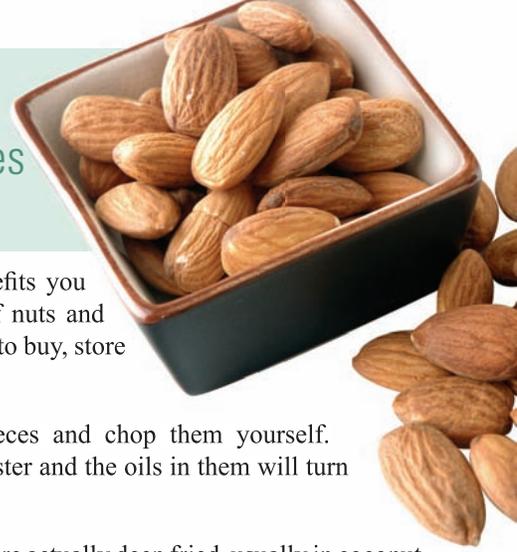
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Buy **whole** nuts,
not pieces
and chop them yourself.



For the best health benefits you should eat a wide variety of nuts and keep them fresh. Here's how to buy, store and prepare them:

1. Buy whole nuts, not pieces and chop them yourself. Smaller pieces oxidize faster and the oils in them will turn rancid more quickly.
2. Avoid roasted nuts. They are actually deep fried, usually in coconut oil. Dry roasted nuts are OK.
3. Store nuts in the refrigerator or freezer. Use jars or sealable heavy-duty bags to keep out odors and air.
4. Toasting nuts brings out their flavor, which helps you make the most of a small amount. Use a dry skillet, shake often and toast only until nuts are fragrant.

Many changes in our diets take lots of work and lots of discipline, but adding a handful of nuts to your diet is easy. Remember, it is the small steps we take daily that will turn into healthy lifetime habits. It is time we take a hint from our squirrel friends and begin nibbling on nuts! *W*



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