

Health Benefits of Walnuts



Walnuts are a rich source of vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytonutrients like antioxidants. They contain compounds shown to lower cholesterol and inflammation and improve blood flow, decreasing risk associated with multiple chronic diseases. Although high in fat, walnut intake is not associated with increased risk of [obesity](#).

WHAT MAKES WALNUTS GREAT?

Nutrition

Walnuts are approximately 65% fat and 25% protein. They are low in carbohydrates and contain beneficial dietary fiber.

Fat

Although high in fat, more than half the fat in walnuts is unsaturated, consisting of monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) and polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA). Both MUFA and PUFA help to lower LDL and total cholesterol, lowering risk of heart attack and stroke.

One of the most beneficial PUFAs is ALA, alpha linolenic acid, an essential omega 3 fatty acid. Omega 3 fatty acids play an important role in the formation of cellular membranes, and have many functions in the heart, lung, endocrine and immune systems.

Vitamins

Walnuts contain a good amount of folate, one of several B vitamins found in walnuts (niacin, B6). Folate helps to lower homocysteine, an amino acid that may increase plaque build-up in arteries. Niacin helps turn food into energy. Large prescriptive doses have been used to lower cholesterol. B6 is involved in protein, carbohydrate and fat metabolism. It also play a role in maintaining normal levels of homocysteine, hemoglobin formation and immune function.

Minerals

Walnuts contain several notable minerals including calcium, magnesium and potassium, while also being low in sodium. This combination is associated with [protection](#) against bone loss, hypertension, insulin resistance and cardiovascular disease.

Amino Acid

Walnuts contain the amino acid, L-arginine, a key component to the making of nitric oxide. Nitric oxide is a vasodilator, triggering the walls of the artery to relax and expand, increasing blood flow and circulation. Nitric oxide also has a role in healing the artery walls, keeping them smooth and flexible for optimal blood flow.

Fiber

One serving of walnuts (1 oz or about 14 halves) provides at least 2 grams of dietary fiber. About 0.5 gram is soluble fiber, known to help lower cholesterol. The remaining fiber is insoluble, which helps improve digestive transport and acts as food for healthy gut bacteria (prebiotic).

Phytonutrients

Walnuts provide antioxidants like vitamin E and phenolic compounds, that protect cells from oxidative stress, fighting free radicals that can lead to aging and disease. Although plant foods do not contain cholesterol, walnuts contain a plant version called phytosterols. These sterols interfere with cholesterol absorption, helping to lower cholesterol, one of the key health benefits to consuming walnuts.

Health Benefits

Numerous clinical trials and observational studies have demonstrated that walnut intake is associated with lower risk of heart attack and heart disease mortality. Others show decreased risk of diabetes and obesity. Fewer but notable studies show reduced risk for several cancers.



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Healthy Candied Walnuts

Loveinmyoven.com

Ingredients:

1/3 c maple syrup 1/2 tsp sea salt (divided)
 1 tsp vanilla extract 1 tsp cinnamon
 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
 3 c whole, unsalted walnuts

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 325°F and line baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a small mixing bowl, whisk together syrup, vanilla, 1/4 tsp salt and spices. Add nuts and stir to combine.
3. Pour mixture onto baking sheet, including all the liquid, and spread evenly.
4. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove from oven to stir and return to bake another 15 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes. Be sure to coat well with syrup mixture.
5. Remove nuts from oven and sprinkle with remaining salt, stir and allow to cool.
6. Store in airtight container at room temp for 1-2 weeks.

Walnut Meatballs

Adapted from *walnuts.org*

Ingredients:

1 Tbsp olive oil 1/2 c chopped walnuts
 1/4 c minced onion 1/4 c cooked brown rice
 1 tsp minced garlic 1/4 c panko breadcrumbs
 1 Tbsp tomato paste 1 Tbsp Italian seasoning
 2 Tbsp chopped Italian parsley
 1 egg (or 1 Tbsp flax meal + 3 Tbsp warm water)
 Optional (1/4 c Parmesan cheese)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F and line baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Heat oil in skillet over medium heat and sauté onion and garlic for 1 minute. Add tomato paste and cook 1 minute more.
3. Transfer to food processor or high-speed blender and add remaining ingredients. Pulse until combined but not mushy.
4. Form into 8 balls and place on baking sheet. Cook 12 minutes or until firm.

Walnut Taco "Meat"

Adapted from *minimalistbaker.com*

Ingredients:

2 c raw walnuts
 3 cloves garlic, minced
 1/2 c sun dried tomatoes (not in oil)
 1/3 tsp salt
 1 Tbsp paprika or smoked paprika
 2 tsp ground cumin
 2 tsp chili powder
 1-2 habanero peppers, chopped
 1/4 c water as needed

Directions:

1. Rehydrate sundried tomatoes with warm water (5 min) then drain but reserve water.
 2. Pulse walnuts in food processor or high-speed blender into chunky meal. Set aside in a bowl.
 3. Blend tomatoes, peppers and spices, using reserved water to form sauce.
 4. Pour sauce over walnuts and stir.
 5. Taste and adjust flavor as needed adding more salt, garlic or pepper as desired.
 6. Use this "meat" for tacos, salads, nachos, burritos and more.
- Makes four 1/2-cup servings
 Nutrition per serving: 373 Calories, 9 g protein, 33 g fat, 5 g fiber

REFERENCES

American Heart Association www.Heart.org
<https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Omega3FattyAcids-HealthProfessional/>
<https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminB6-HealthProfessional/>

For More Walnut Recipes

[Love in my Oven](http://LoveinmyOven.com)
Walnuts.org
Yummly.com