Boost Heart Health By Adding Nuts To Diet  
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Heart disease and stroke are still major killers of Americans. Often it seems we hear only what not to eat to lower our risks for cardiovascular disease. Wouldn’t it be nice to have some foods touted as good for our heart? Well, nuts may be just the thing.

More and more evidence indicates nuts may have a beneficial effect on our serum cholesterol levels. Some studies even indicate eating nuts every day may be as effective, or even more effective, than consuming olive oil or other vegetable oil to lower cardiovascular disease risk. Some think it is the unsaturated fat contained in nuts that may be protective, but others believe additional nutrients, like the antioxidants; luteolin and tocoptrenols also present in nuts protects us as well. It may be that the fat and antioxidants working together helps to keep us healthy. This working together is called “food synergy”.

One ounce of nuts equals about 1/4 cup or a small handful of nuts. Each ounce of nuts contains between 160-204 calories depending on the type of nut. As you are well aware, nuts are also high in fat ranging from 13 grams per ounce for cashews to 21 grams per ounce for macadamia nuts. This may seem like a lot of calories and fat, but if you substitute the fat and calories contained in nuts for other less healthy fats, you are not to gain weight. Some studies even indicate that people who are following reduced calorie diets are more satisfied with less food when they include small amounts of nuts in their meals and snacks.

Some suggestions on how you can add nuts to your diet without adding too many extra calories include:

- Add chopped nuts to salads instead of cheese or meat.
- Sprinkle nuts onto hot cereal instead of adding butter or margarine.
- Top pancakes or waffles with a mixture of nuts and cooked fruit and skip the margarine and syrup.
- Snack on a small handful of nuts instead of potato chips or a candy bar.
- Have some nuts with a fruit salad and yogurt for lunch instead of eating that burger and fries.
- Spread peanut butter on a bagel instead of cream cheese.

A modified fat diet does not have to be boring or tasteless. Start adding nuts and you’ll be surprised by how interesting your meals become.

Have a question? Contact the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension office at (229)734-3015, weekdays 8 a.m. to noon or 1 to 5 p.m.

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