

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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## “Eating Nuts Is Smart”

Currently, a number of articles are singing praises for eating nuts to protect one's health and possibly prolong the lifespan. The New England Journal of Medicine published results showing that people who eat a handful of nuts every day live longer than those who do not eat them at all. Their data was based on a Harvard study, which analyzed data on nearly 120,000 people collected over 30 years, and found that regular nut eaters tended to be slimmer than those who ate no nuts, putting to rest the notion that eating nuts leads to weight gain. Senior author, Prof. Charles S. Fuchs, said, "The most obvious benefit was a reduction of 29% in deaths from heart disease - the major killer of people in America. But we also saw a significant reduction - 11% - in the risk of dying from cancer." Interestingly, investigators found that the reduced risk of death was similar for both nuts that grow on trees, such as cashews and Brazils, and peanuts, which grow under the ground and which are technically a legume. Other types of tree nuts include almonds, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts. Prior studies have shown an association between eating nuts and lower risk for many diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, gallstones, colon cancer and diverticulitis (although nuts may pose a special danger to diverticulitis patients). Nuts have also been linked with lower cholesterol, reductions in inflammation, oxidative stress, body fat and insulin resistance. Investigators found people who ate more nuts tended to be leaner, to eat more fruits and vegetables, not smoke, be more physically active, and drink more alcohol. These factors were taken into account in this cohort-questionnaire study. And still, they were able to find an independent link between nut consumption and lower risk of death. Actually, they found the more nuts people ate, the less likely they were to die over the 30-year study period as follows: eating nuts less than once a week was linked to a 7% reduction in risk of death, once a week was linked to an 11% reduction, two to four times a week to a 13% reduction, five to six times a week to a 15% reduction, and seven or more times a week, to a 20% reduction. Yet, the study was not designed to examine cause and effect. So, it can not prove that eating more nuts causes people to live longer. Another article found eating nuts was linked to reduced risk of pancreatic cancer.

In the America that I love, my research supports a wealth of evidence that nut consumption has definite health benefits and reduces risk of common diseases. Enjoy and go nuts!

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