Peanuts have long been studied for their benefits for heart health, diabetes and weight management. New research from Harvard shows that eating peanuts daily can lead to a longer life. This study showed that men and women who ate an ounce of peanuts everyday reduced their risk of death from all causes by up to 20%. Researchers also noted that peanut eaters were leaner and had a reduced risk of obesity.

This study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, is the largest to date to look at death from all causes in nut eaters. The study tracked nearly 119,000 men and women from the Nurses’ Health Study and the Health Professionals Follow-up Study over a 30-year period.

They found that the more frequently peanuts and nuts were consumed, the lower the risk of death. Compared to non-nut eaters, those who consumed peanuts and nuts occasionally reduced risk of death by 7%, weekly eaters reduced risk by 11%, eating peanuts two to four times a week cut risk by 13%, and eating peanuts and nuts seven or more times a week cut risk by about 20%.

When researchers looked at death rates based on peanuts, they found that eating peanuts just twice a week reduced death from any cause by 12%. When they looked at death by specific cause, they found that eating peanuts daily reduced risk of death due to heart disease by 24%, respiratory disease by 16%, infections by 32%, and kidney disease by 48%.

When researchers looked at peanuts alone and compared them to a mixture of tree nuts, they found the results were about the same.

“We don’t see any difference in the benefits between peanuts and tree nuts,” said Dr. Charles Fuchs, Harvard Medical School.

Current USDA data shows peanuts are the most popular nut in the U.S. and represent half of all nuts consumed. During the years observed in the study for all nuts combined, USDA data shows peanuts and peanut butter represented 69% of the total nut intake, making peanuts a strong driver for the results.

Previous research from Harvard School of Public Health showed that a 1-ounce serving of peanuts or a half serving (one tablespoon) of peanut butter eaten five or more times a week can decrease the risk of diabetes by 27% and 21% respectively. Additional work by Harvard showed that a handful of peanuts eaten five or more times per week can cut the risk of heart disease in half.

This study explains, “Nutrients in nuts, such as unsaturated fatty acids, high-quality protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals may confer cardioprotective, anticarcinogenic, antiinflammatory, and antioxidant properties.”

**Did you know**

**Frequent peanut consumption does not cause weight gain.** Eating peanuts daily is associated with a smaller waist, less weight gain, and decreased risk of obesity.
Did you know that peanuts are among the list of foods approved by the American Heart Association® to carry the Heart-Check logo? Both raw and roasted—salted or unsalted—peanuts meet the American Heart Association® Heart-Check criteria. To get the Heart-Check, nuts must have less than 4 grams of saturated fat, no trans fat, no cholesterol, less than 140mg of sodium, and 10% or more Daily Value of at least one beneficial nutrient like fiber or protein.

Research shows that eating nuts daily can reduce risk of death from heart disease by 29%, and even eating peanuts just twice a week can reduce risk by 24%.

Peanuts help prevent heart disease by lowering blood pressure and decreasing bad LDL cholesterol while maintaining good HDL cholesterol.

A new study from Purdue University showed that eating peanuts regularly helps decrease blood pressure. Amongst participants with high blood pressure, the changes were greatest over the first two weeks, and were sustained throughout the duration of the study.

Research shows similar findings for those with elevated cholesterol levels. A study from The Pennsylvania State University found that nuts reduce the risk of heart disease in individuals with high cholesterol. Researchers attribute the health benefits of daily peanut consumption to their dense nutrient content.

Peanuts are part of a heart-healthy diet as they are naturally low in sodium and contain heart-healthy nutrients. When salt is added to peanuts, it stays on the surface so less is needed. One ounce of oil-roasted salted peanuts typically contains 91mg of sodium, which is less than half of the amount in one ounce of cheese puffs and less than a third of the amount in one ounce of salted pretzels.

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### See how peanuts stacked up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AHA Heart-Check Nutritional Requirements for Nuts</th>
<th>Oil roasted, salted peanuts (1 oz or 28 g)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat ≤ 4 g (per 50 g)</td>
<td>2 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat &lt; 0.5 g (per label serving)</td>
<td>0 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol &lt; 0 mg (per label serving)</td>
<td>0 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium ≤ 140 mg (per label serving)</td>
<td>91 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber ≥ 10% of Daily Value</td>
<td>10% Daily Value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Sodium in Snack Foods

Pretzels contain more than three times as much salt as oil-roasted salted peanuts.
A new study released in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that different flavors of peanuts—salted, spicy, honey-roasted, or unsalted—result in positive health benefits. The study, "A Randomized Trial on the Effects of Flavorings on the Health Benefits of Daily Peanut Consumption," was conducted at Purdue University and included over 150 men and women who incorporated peanuts into their daily diet for 12 weeks.

Participants were randomly assigned three 0.5-ounce portions of three peanut flavors or just 1.5 ounces of one flavor, which were eaten as a snack or as part of a meal. Researchers took blood samples every four weeks and other health measurements every two weeks.

Indeed, results showed that all varieties of peanuts significantly decreased mean diastolic blood pressure in all participants. For those who had high blood pressure, the changes were greatest over the first two weeks of the study and were sustained throughout the 12 weeks (See Figure 1). Interestingly, the findings were similar for salted and unsalted peanuts; and while all participants decreased their blood pressure, those who ate salted or unsalted peanuts had slightly greater decreases than those who consumed spicy or honey-roasted peanuts.

The paper explains that these results may be due to the arginine found in peanuts, “which promotes the production of nitric oxide—a vasodilator that potentially leads to a decrease in blood pressure.” Data shows that peanuts contain more arginine than any other nut, and in fact, more than any other whole food.18

In addition, as shown in previous research, this study found that daily peanut intake reduced total serum cholesterol and triglyceride levels in participants who had high levels at the start (See Figure 2). High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for cardiovascular disease, while high blood cholesterol continues to be a major risk factor as well.
Swap red meat one night this week for heart-health. Try this plant-based peanut burger!

peanut farro veggie burger

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350F and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Cook farro, barley or brown rice according to package.
3. Boil the sweet potatoes. Drain and set aside. Once the potatoes are cool, peel and place them in a large bowl.
4. Heat 2 Tbsp of olive oil in a pan and sauté the peanuts for one minute. Add the mushrooms and cook until the water has released and the pan is dry again. Add mushroom and peanut mixture to bowl with sweet potatoes.
5. Heat remaining 2 Tbsp of olive oil in the pan and cook shallots, pepper and salt for 2 minutes. Add to bowl with sweet potatoes and mushrooms.
6. Add Parmesan and farro, barley or brown rice to bowl and mix with potato masher.
7. Mix breadcrumbs and flour in a shallow dish. Form 10 patties from the mixture. Press each patty into the breadcrumb mixture and place on baking sheet.
8. Bake for 20 minutes, then flip and bake for an additional 15 minutes or until golden brown.
9. Serve with lowfat swiss cheese, carmelized onions, or even peanut sauce on your favorite whole-wheat bun.

Recipe developed by The Culinary Institute of America as an industry service to The Peanut Institute.

Ingredients

- ¾ cup farro, barley or brown rice
- 1 lb sweet potatoes
- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- ¾ cup chopped peanuts
- 1 lb chopped mushroom caps
- 3 chopped shallots
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- ¾ tsp salt
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup peanut flour or all-purpose flour
- ½ cup breadcrumbs
- 10 whole grain hamburger buns or rolls
- 1 lb chopped mushroom caps
- 3 chopped shallots
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- ¾ tsp salt
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup peanut flour or all-purpose flour
- ½ cup breadcrumbs
- 10 whole grain hamburger buns or rolls

References