



Eat Nuts to Decrease Your Heart Disease Risk

Adding a handful of nuts to an already healthful diet can reduce the risk of heart disease, according to a recent study. Researchers wanted to see if nuts or olive oil would decrease the risk factors for heart disease. They chose to study a group of older adults who were at risk for cardiovascular disease who also ate a Mediterranean diet (lots of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and fish). The majority (61.4%) of people



in the study met the criteria for metabolic syndrome – a combination of factors (e.g., abdominal fat, high blood fats, high blood pressure, and elevated blood sugar) that increase a person's risk of heart disease.

At the end of one year, the prevalence of metabolic syndrome was reduced nearly 14% in the group eating the nuts. The control group (those eating the basic Mediterranean diet) had a 2% reduction and the olive oil group experienced a 6.7% reduction. Among those in the nut-eating group who

already had metabolic syndrome, 70% were more likely to have a reversal of metabolic syndrome than were those in the control group.

For best heart health, eat a handful of nuts daily. Choose a variety, including almonds, walnuts, pecans, pistachios, and Brazil nuts.

Archives of Internal Medicine.
Dec. 8, 2008.



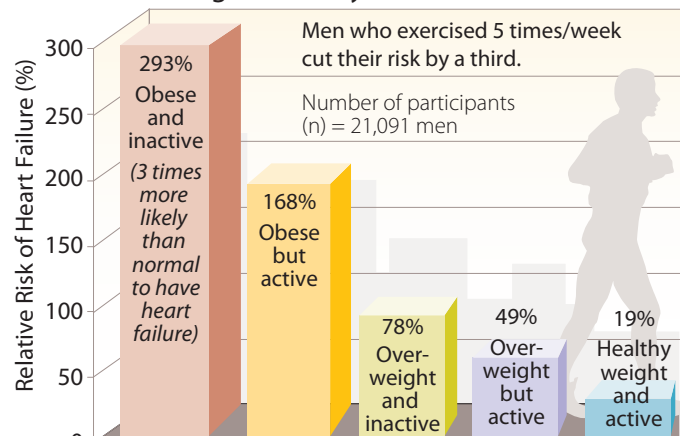
Shedding a Few Extra Pounds and Getting Active Helps Your Heart

Even a little weight, especially combined with inactivity, increases the risk of a specific heart problem called heart failure. A recent analysis of data from more than 21,000 men participating in the Physicians' Health Study revealed that overweight men had a 49% increased risk of heart failure. How much overweight? Just a little, according to the researchers; every 7 pounds of excess body weight increases the risk of heart failure by 11%. For obese men (a BMI greater than 30), the risk for heart failure was 2.8 times higher than for lean, fit men.

Physical activity also helps decrease that risk. In the analysis, men who exercised enough to work up a sweat on at least 5 days a week cut their risk by a third (36%) compared to inactive men. Even a little exercise – only a few times a month – cut the risk by 18%.

Circulation. Dec. 2008.

Weight, Activity, & Risk of Heart Failure



Take the Heart Risk Assessment from the American Heart Association:
www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3003499

Do You Know the Signs of Depression?

Mental conditions such as depression and anxiety affect about 1 in 5 Americans. A tough situation such as a natural disaster, the loss of a loved one, or financial distress can trigger or increase depression and anxiety. Someone who is depressed has feelings of sadness or anxiety that last for weeks at a time. Other signs include:

- Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Overeating, or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts

Take a depression self-assessment:
<http://wellsource.info/handouts/depression-assessment.pdf>

- Persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not get better, even with treatment

If you recognize these symptoms in yourself or someone you love, see your doctor or a mental health professional.

Depression usually doesn't just go away on its own like a cold or the flu, but depression is treatable.

National Institute of Mental Health.
Depression. 2009.



Beware! Weight Loss Products Can Be Dangerous

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns consumers that more than 25 weight-loss products contain undeclared, active pharmaceutical ingredients that may jeopardize your health. Some of these products are marketed as “dietary supplements” or claim to contain only “herbal” or “natural” ingredients. These products are sold both online and in stores. They are not FDA approved and are considered illegal.

“These tainted weight-loss products pose a great risk to public health because they contain undeclared ingredients

and, in some cases, contain prescription drugs in amounts that greatly exceed their maximum recommended dosages,” said Janet Woodcock, MD, director, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, FDA. “Consumers have no way of knowing that these products contain powerful drugs that could cause serious health consequences.”

The best way to lose weight is to adopt healthy lifestyle habits: Expend more calories than you consume. Be more physically active and learn to like good-for-you foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and a moderate amount of nuts (which contain healthy fats).

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Dec. 22, 2008.

Dangerous weight loss products are listed on the FDA website: www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01933.html. If you have been using any of the listed products, stop taking them and consult your healthcare professional immediately.

Five Simple Ways You Can Help Reverse the Diabetes Epidemic

The rate of new diabetes cases nearly doubled in the United States over the last decade. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 24 million Americans now have diabetes, and at least 57 million adults have pre-diabetes. The increased incidence is linked to obesity and inactivity.

With a few simple adjustments, you can reduce your diabetes risk:

- ✓ **Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight can keep your body from making and using insulin properly. Excess body weight can also cause high blood pressure. Set a goal to lose a pound a week.
- ✓ **Be physically active for 30-60 minutes on most days of the week.** Physical activity can help you control your weight, blood sugar, and blood pressure. It can raise your HDL (good) cholesterol and lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol.
- ✓ **Reduce serving sizes of main courses, meat, desserts, and foods high in fat.** Increase the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat.
- ✓ **Limit your sodium (salt) intake to less than 1,500 mg at day** – about ½ teaspoon of salt.

- ✓ If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, **limit your intake to 1 drink (for women) or 2 drinks (for men) a day.**

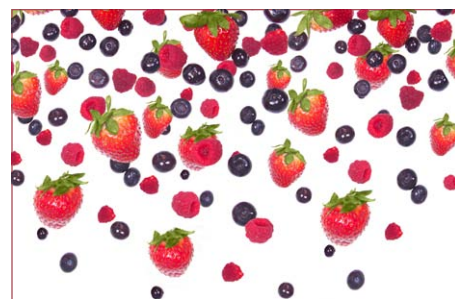
When you encourage your loved ones, children, neighbors, friends, and co-workers to walk with you and to eat healthfully, you are also helping them reduce their diabetes risk.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2008.

Find out if you are at risk for diabetes: <http://ndep.nih.gov/ddi/resources/risktest.pdf>

What Is Diabetes?

All of the carbohydrate in food you eat is turned into glucose (or sugar) for your body to use for energy. The pancreas, an organ that is near the stomach, makes a hormone called insulin to help glucose get into the cells of your body. If you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't use its own insulin as well as it should. This causes glucose and fats to build up in your blood. Over time, this can damage vital organs and lead to heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, amputation, pregnancy complications, and death from pneumonia or influenza.



Berries Are Good for Your Heart and Brain

Eating foods high in antioxidants – such as blueberries, blackberries, cranberries, purple grape juice, strawberries, and walnuts – slows the aging process, improves brain function, and helps lower your risk of cardiovascular disease.

<http://wellsourc.info/handouts/berries.pdf>

ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

Q: How can I be sure my heart is OK?

A: Go to wellsourc.info/wn/ask-heart.pdf to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: wel@wellsourc.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

Health Challenge™: “Be Physically Active Daily” available at: wellsourc.info/wn/hc-active.pdf. Aim for 30-60 minutes of physical activity each day. Make a plan, keep a record, and stick with it. If you miss a day, make a point to get up and move the next day.