

WELLBEING

GO NUTS!

If you are potty about pistachios and batty about brazils, then feel free to shell out on them. According to a new study, your kernel cravings could actually help you to live longer

Many people looking to lose weight and eat healthier food in the new year might be making an effort not to reach for the nut bowl. But according to the latest research, this could be a big mistake.

Packed with essential fats, nuts actually offer many health benefits. And while different types of nuts offer varying nutritional bonuses, research carried out in the US has found that eating a golf ball-sized serving every day of any variety can lead to a healthier and longer life – and help you stay slender.

Two studies, conducted by Harvard University's School of Public Health in association with Brigham and Women's Hospital, tracked 119,000 men and women over a 30-year period, and found that those who ate nuts every day were

20 per cent less likely to have died during that time than those who avoided nuts.

In addition to having decreased morbidity rates, the frequent nut eaters were also found to weigh less and exercise more, and were less likely to smoke. So was it simply the nut eaters' tendency towards a healthier lifestyle, rather than the nuts themselves, that made them more likely to live longer?

Not so, according to the researchers, who carried out separate analyses on smokers and non-smokers, heavy and light exercisers, and people with and without diabetes, and concluded that eating nuts had a positive effect on life expectancy in all those subjects.

Compared with non-nut eaters, those who ate them seven or more times a week had a 29 per cent lower risk of dying of heart disease and an 11 per cent lower risk of dying of cancer. What's more, it did not seem to matter what sort of nuts they chose, as the benefits held true for pistachios, almonds, walnuts and other tree nuts, plus, to a slightly lesser extent, peanuts.

And those worried about their weight should take note: despite the relatively high calorie content of nuts, those who ate them frequently were found to be less likely to pile on the pounds. "There's a general perception that if you eat more nuts you're going to get fat," said Dr Ying Bao of the Brigham and Women's Hospital, who led the study. "Our results show the opposite."

Previous research has also found that nut consumption can lower your risk of heart disease, diabetes and colon cancer. The exact reason why they are so good for you has not yet been made clear; however it is known that they are a rich source of unsaturated fatty acids, minerals and other nutrients, and may confer, the study says, "cardioprotective, anti-carcinogenic, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties".

NUTRITIONAL NOTES

With the study finding that you can enjoy the life-prolonging benefits of nuts whatever type you choose, here's the other benefits that popular varieties have to offer:




Almonds The gold standard nut for many nutritionists, they are rich in fibre, vitamins and minerals, mono-unsaturated fatty acids and vitamin E. Almonds are also gluten-free, making them ideal for coeliacs.

Peanuts Despite being a legume rather than a nut, they are a rich source of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, with the added benefit of containing resveratrol, the powerful antioxidant also found in grapes, and p-coumaric acid, a compound thought to reduce your risk of stomach cancer.

Brazil nuts Rich in essential fatty acids and an excellent source of vitamin E. The most potent dietary source of the mineral selenium, which combined with vitamin E creates a powerful antioxidant blend which can help to tackle all

types of inflammation.


Cashews High in fibre and loaded with heart-friendly oleic and palmitoleic essential fatty acids, cashews play a key role in the Mediterranean diet, which is known to help prevent coronary heart disease and strokes. They are also a particularly good source of copper, zinc and selenium, as well as the B group vitamins that can help prevent anaemia and dermatitis, and are involved in maintaining healthy metabolism.


Walnuts Packed with energy, minerals and antioxidants, they are particularly rich in omega 3 and oleic acid. Studies have found that eating walnuts regularly can reduce your bad cholesterol levels and cut your risk of developing breast, bowel and prostate cancers. 

HEALTH NOTES

 **On track for fitness** If you want to work out to your own soundtrack, then try Monster iSport Freedom (£229.95 from monsterproducts.com). The on-ear, wireless, washable headphones have won a fan in singer Kimberly Wyatt, who says: "Now I am able to immerse myself in flawless sound, forget about the hassle of tangled wires and focus on working out."



 **Cold comfort** In winter, does it seem as though your child has a constant cold? Don't panic, it's perfectly normal. Because their immune systems are still developing children catch, on average, seven to ten colds a year – more than twice the average cold count for adults.

 **Stub it out** If you are serious about giving up smoking this year, a new book could be the answer. Written by the NHS's leading stop-smoking expert Professor Robert West, *The SmokeFree Formula* (£9.99, Orion) features all the top quitting aids – from electronic cigarettes to professional support, websites and medication – to help you find the right method.

