

INSIDE THE SHELL

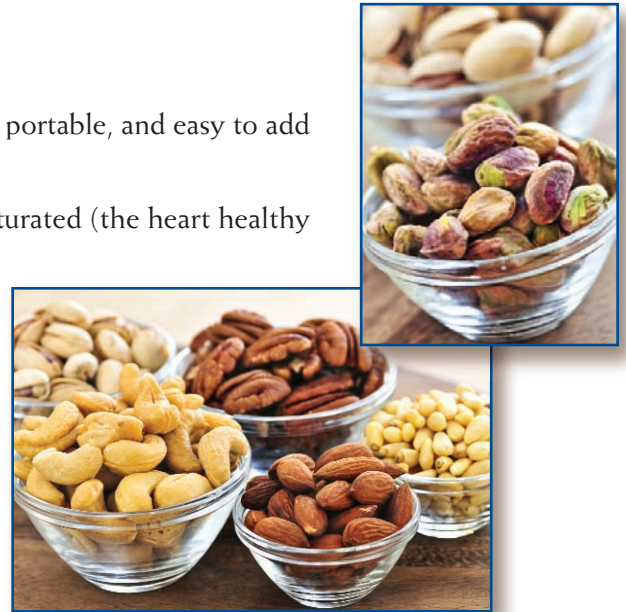
Walnuts, almonds, pecans, and more—almost every type of nut has a lot of nutrition tucked inside its shell. Each type of nut has its own health benefits, but all are filled with fiber, protein, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. Nuts may help:

- Reduce your blood pressure
- Decrease cholesterol
- Reduce your risk of developing blood clots

Not only are nuts filling and nutritious, they are compact, portable, and easy to add to meals and snacks.

Yes, nuts do contain fat, but most of that fat is monounsaturated (the heart healthy fat). One handful of nuts per day is a healthy choice.

The Food and Drug Administration recommends a diet with 1 to 1.5 ounce portion (1 to 1.5 handfuls) of nuts per day to help you eat less, control your weight, and keep your heart healthy. Eating nuts can also help decrease “bad” (LDL) cholesterol levels. Because nuts are packed with healthy fat they still have a lot of calories, so you need to make sure you don’t eat too many.



■ So what makes nuts heart-healthy?

With each type of nut it varies, but most nuts contain these heart-healthy substances:

- **Unsaturated fats:** These are the "good" fats in nuts, specifically monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which help lower “bad” cholesterol levels.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** These healthy fatty acids help decrease your risk of heart attacks. Nuts are one of the best plant-based sources of omega-3 fatty acids.
- **L-arginine:** L-arginine is a substance that may help improve the health of your artery walls by making them less prone to clots so your blood can flow freely.
- **Fiber:** Fiber, which is found in most nuts, helps lower your cholesterol. It also makes you feel fuller longer and helps maintain blood sugar levels.
- **Plant sterols:** Plant sterols are substances that can help lower your cholesterol.

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Try this recipe containing heart-healthy walnuts.

Zucchini Walnut Bread:

Makes: 2 mini loaves, 8 slices each

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup whole-wheat flour
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 cup grated zucchini, lightly packed (about 8 ounces)
- 2 tablespoons chopped walnuts

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat 2, 6-by-3-inch loaf pans with cooking spray.
2. Mix whole-wheat flour, all-purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg in a bowl.
3. Whisk egg whites, sugar, and oil in a medium bowl. Stir in zucchini.
4. Make a well in the dry ingredients; slowly, mix in the zucchini mixture with a rubber spatula. Fold in walnuts. Transfer the batter to the prepared pans.
5. Bake the loaves 40-45 min or until a toothpick comes out almost clean. Cool in the pan for about 5 minutes, then turn out onto the rack to cool completely.

Nutritional Information – per slice: 118 calories, 4g total fat (0g saturated fat), 22g total carbohydrates, 1g fiber, 11g sugar, 2g protein, 88mg sodium.



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