

Tree nut consumption associated with reduced risk of pancreatic cancer in women

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In a large prospective study published online in the *British Journal of Cancer*, researchers looked at the association between nut consumption and risk of pancreatic cancer among 75,680 women in the Nurses' Health Study, with no previous history of cancer. Consumption of nuts, including tree nuts (such as almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts), was inversely associated with risk of pancreatic cancer, independent of other potential risk factors for pancreatic cancer.

Women who consumed a one-ounce serving of nuts two or more times per week had a significantly reduced risk of [pancreatic cancer](#) (RR, 0.65; 95% CI, 0.47-0.92; P=0.007) compared to those who largely abstained from nuts. "This reduction in risk was independent of established or suspected [risk factors](#) for pancreatic cancer including age, height, obesity, physical activity, smoking, diabetes and dietary factors," stated lead author, Ying Bao, MD, ScD, from the Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA.

Pancreatic cancer is the fourth most common cause for cancer-related mortality in the U.S., yet very few modifiable risk factors have been identified. According to the 2009 World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research (WCRF/AICR) report, aside from cigarette smoking, body fatness was the only convincing modifiable risk factor for pancreatic cancer.

While there may be concern that frequent nut consumption may result in weight gain and thereby increase the risk of developing pancreatic cancer, the opposite seems to be true. "In our cohort women who consumed the most [nuts](#) tended to weigh less," reported Dr. Bao. Moreover, in a recent analysis of this same cohort, higher nut consumption was associated with a slightly lower risk of weight gain and obesity.

Nut intake has also been associated with a reduced risk of diabetes mellitus, which is a risk factor for pancreatic cancer. "Nuts contain a variety of important vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals," states Maureen Ternus, M.S., R.D., Executive Director of the International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research & Education Foundation (INC NREF). "This exciting, new study provides yet another reason to encourage people to eat a handful—or 1/3 cup—of [tree nuts](#) every day."

More information: Bao, Y., F.B. Hu, E.L. Giovannucci, B.M. Wolpin, M.J. Stampfer, W.C. Willett, C.S. Fuchs, 2013. Nut consumption and risk of pancreatic cancer in women. *Br J Cancer*. [DOI: 10.1038/bjc.2013.665](https://doi.org/10.1038/bjc.2013.665)

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