

Only 4 in 10 americans eat heart-healthy nuts each day, CDC says

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Even fewer consume an amount thought to help curb heart disease, study found.

(HealthDay)—Nutrition experts advocate including nuts in a heart-healthy diet, but a new study finds that about 60 percent of Americans don't consume these foods on a daily basis.

The study, released Dec. 17 by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the *NCHS Data Brief*, found that about 38 percent of American adults ate nuts each day, usually in the form of the nuts themselves or in the form of [peanut butter](#) or other "nut butters."

The ideal level of consumption is about an ounce-and-a-half of nuts—equal to about 240 calories— according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration guidelines on reducing heart disease.

However, in 2009-2010, the years the new study was conducted, only about 14 percent of men and 12 percent of women reached that level of

consumption, the researchers found.

"Improved diet quality and overall health have been associated with nut and seed consumption. However, according to new population-based data, American diets are lacking," said Danielle Staub, a nutritionist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

The new study "tells us that as a population, we should be regularly consuming more whole nuts and seeds as part of a well-balanced, heart-healthy diet," said Staub, who was not involved in the new research.

The CDC report was led by Samara Joy Nielsen of the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Her team looked at 2009-2010 data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys.

The investigators found that women were more likely to consume nuts on a daily basis than men, and whites were more likely to consume the foods compared to blacks or Hispanics.

"Improved nutrient intake and [diet quality](#) have been shown to be associated with nut consumption," the study authors wrote. And, "because nuts and seeds are calorie-dense and high in protein, small portions can be eaten as a replacement for other protein foods. Nut consumption has also been associated with decreased obesity, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome and diabetes."

In 2003, the FDA also released a statement that the "scientific evidence suggests, but does not prove, that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease."

For the purpose of the study, the CDC definition of "nuts" included everything from peanuts, peanut butter and cashews to pumpkin seeds

and sesame paste, among many others.

Another nutrition expert agreed that nuts have a place in a heart-healthy [diet](#).

"Nuts are a terrific source of both healthy unsaturated fats and plant-based protein," said Dana White, clinical associate professor of athletic training and sports medicine at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Conn.

"They are easy to eat and take on the go for a hunger-fighting snack," she said. "In addition to snacking, I also like to use nuts in my cooking. Adding [nuts](#) to smoothies, salads and making homemade nut butters are just a few of the ways we utilize them in my house."

More information: There's more on the nutritional benefits of nuts at the [Harvard School of Public Health](#).

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