Consumer health: Nuts and your heart

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March is National Nutrition Month, which makes this a good time to learn more about the heart health benefits of eating nuts.

Eating nuts can improve your [heart health](link) and lower your risk of dying early from heart disease and other causes. Research has found that

people who are at risk of a heart attack can cut their risk by eating a [healthy diet](link) that includes nuts.

Research suggests that eating nuts may:

- Lower your [low-density lipoprotein](link), or LDL or "bad," cholesterol and triglyceride levels, which play a major role in the buildup of deposits called plaques in your arteries.
- Improve the health of the lining of your arteries.
- Lower levels of inflammation linked to heart disease.
- Reduce the risk of developing blood clots, which can lead to a heart attack and death.

Some nuts have more heart-healthy nutrients than others. Most nuts, though, contain at least some [unsaturated fats](link), omega-3 fatty acids, fiber, vitamin E, plant sterols and L-arginine — all of which are heart-healthy.

One drawback to nuts is that they're high in calories, so it's important to limit portions. And keep in mind that you could cancel out the heart-healthy benefits of nuts if they're covered with chocolate, sugar or salt. But choosing nuts instead of a less-healthy snack may help you stick to a heart-healthy diet.

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