

GO NUTS FOR HEALTH
Have you had your handful of tree nuts today?

Davis, CA – “More and more research shows the positive impact of tree nut consumption on satiety and weight management, as well as a number of chronic diseases including heart disease and diabetes,” states Lindsay Allen, PhD, Director of the USDA ARS Western Human Nutrition Research Center. Dr. Allen was commenting on proceedings from the Nuts and Health Symposium in the September 2008 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition*.

Epidemiologic studies show that consuming tree nuts (almonds, Brazils, cashews, hazelnuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, macadamias and walnuts) five or more times per week is associated with a reduced risk of developing both diabetes and heart disease. In one analysis, individuals who ate the most nuts had about a 35 percent reduced risk of coronary heart disease. While the FDA qualified health claim for nuts and heart disease recommends 1.5 ounces of nuts per day, few people actually consume this amount on a daily basis. In the 2001-2004 What We Eat in America/NHANES survey, 34 percent of those surveyed consumed nuts but most only ate about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an ounce—roughly half of the recommended amount. And, approximately 60 percent of the nuts were consumed as snacks.

According to Janet King, PhD, co-chair of the 2007 Nuts and Health Symposium and past chair of the 2005 USDA Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, “Many people consume as much as 25 percent of their total caloric intake from snacks. If we could replace snacks high in refined carbohydrates with just $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of nuts per day we could have a positive impact on nutrient density and the risk of chronic disease.”

Moreover, regular nut consumers do not weigh more than those who do not consume nuts despite eating roughly 250 additional calories per day. “Research shows that nuts can actually help maintain body weight,” states Maureen Ternus, M.S., R.D., Executive Director of INC NREF. “Tree nuts contain beneficial unsaturated fats (mono- and polyunsaturated fats), protein and fiber, all of which provide a feeling of fullness.” In addition, studies have shown that the fat in nuts may not be fully absorbed and there may be an increase in resting energy expenditure (the calories burned when you’re resting) with regular nut consumption.

In 2007, the US Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Research Service, Western Human Nutrition Research Center (USDA ARS WHNRC) and the International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research & Education Foundation (INC NREF) joined forces for a 2½ day symposium on nuts and health. To access the 2007 Nuts and Health Symposium proceedings in the September 2008 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition* go to www.nuthealth.org.