

Pistachios for good health



Nuts, like fruits and vegetables, are an integral part of a healthy diet and should be enjoyed every day.

Nuts are like nature's own vitamin supplement – a small package containing a combination of at least 28 different essential nutrients.

Regularly eating nuts has been shown to reduce chronic disease risk, and contribute to overall good health.

Why should nuts, including pistachios, be part of a healthy daily diet?

Decades of research has highlighted the significant health benefits of nuts.

A recent scientific review^[1] found that eating a handful (28g) of nuts a day, compared to eating no nuts, was associated with:

- ↓ 25% reduced risk for coronary heart disease
- ↓ 22% reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- ↓ 22% reduced risk of dying from all causes
- ↓ 21% reduced risk for cardiovascular disease
- ↓ 11% reduced risk of dying from cancer.

Rich in plant-protein

Research suggests a reduced risk of chronic disease (including CVD and type 2 diabetes), and all-cause mortality, when more protein comes from plant foods, such as nuts, grains and legumes^[1-5].

In fact, one study showed that protein from nuts is more effective at reducing CVD mortality than other sources of plant protein, with the protein from nuts (and seeds) being associated with a 40% lower risk of CVD mortality^[6].



A handful of pistachios is equivalent to around 30 pistachio kernels

Pistachios at a glance

- ✓ plant protein
- ✓ healthy unsaturated fats
- ✓ naturally low in sodium
- ✓ potassium, iron and copper
- ✓ vitamin B6, niacin and vitamin E
- ✓ folate
- ✓ dietary fibre

In the context of a balanced diet, regular nut consumption reduces the risk of CVD.



Did you know?

- Of all nuts, pistachios are particularly rich in melatonin – a hormone linked with getting a better night's sleep.
- 'National Pistachio Day' is celebrated every year on 26th February, to encourage people to incorporate pistachios (Pista) into their regular diet.
- According to Ayurveda, Pista is commonly regarded as 'Vata' balancing food, and provides 'Ushna Virya' when consumed regularly.

Pistachios, like other nuts, are a nutrient-dense food, rich in numerous essential vitamins, minerals, unsaturated fatty acids, plant protein and fibre^[7].

Healthy fats – Pistachios are rich in the heart-healthy unsaturated fatty acids – essential for regulating blood lipids and serving as a carrier of fat-soluble vitamins. They contain predominantly mono-unsaturated fats.

Pistachios also contain small amounts of omega-3 alpha linolenic acid (ALA) – which is necessary for growth and development, brain and nerve function, maintaining cell membranes and in regulating inflammation.

Protein – Pistachios contain the highest amount of protein of all tree nuts, providing around 20g of plant protein per 100g – or 6g in a 30g handful.

They contain high amounts of the amino acid arginine. Arginine is converted to nitric acid in the body which causes blood vessels to relax and remain elastic, preventing blood clotting.

Fibre – Pistachios are a source of gut-loving fibre, which is vital for a healthy digestive system. They contain 9g fibre/100g, or 2.7g in a 30g handful.

Antioxidants – Pistachios are one of the few nut sources of resveratrol – the powerful antioxidant with anti-ageing, anti-cancer, anti-viral and cardioprotective properties^[8].

Vitamins and minerals – Pistachios are rich in vitamin B6, which is important for energy production, as well as providing vitamin E, copper, thiamin and niacin.

Plant sterols – Pistachios contain 214mg of plant sterols per 100g. Research has shown that around 2–3g of plant sterols each day helps reduce cholesterol.

Melatonin – Pistachios contain high levels of melatonin^[9,10], which has been linked with getting a better night's sleep and improving sleeping disorders, like insomnia.

A daily 30g handful of nuts, including pistachios, is good for health.



Tips for getting your patients or clients to include pistachios in their day

- According to Ayurveda:
 - Pista are recommended as a winter and autumn ingredient, as they provide 'Ushna Virya'
 - Pista are commonly known as 'Vata' balancing food, and are recommended as a health boosting food
- Pista can be eaten as a snack, as a spread, or used in garnishing to add colour, texture and flavour
- Celebrate New Year, Diwali and other festive seasons by incorporating pista into foods and meals
- Enjoy a handful of pistachios after meals, to help avoid over-eating.

References

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