



# Peanuts nutritious but pack in the calories

## What are the nutrition pros and cons for peanuts?

Peanuts are high in fat and contain a lot of calories — especially if you just can't stop eating them. But they (and their creamy close relative, peanut butter) are nutrient-dense and offer a wide array of health benefits. They certainly can have a place in a healthful diet.

First, the fat: An ounce of dry-roasted peanuts — less than a quarter-cup — contains 165 calories and 14 grams of fat. Two tablespoons of peanut butter contain 188 calories and 16 grams of fat. But, in both cases, almost all of that fat is mono-unsaturated — the heart-healthy kind of fat you want to include in your diet.

In addition, peanuts are a good source of other nutrients that are good for your heart, including vitamin E, folate and manganese. Plus, peanuts contain a small amount of resveratrol, a compound also found in grape juice and red wine that's been associated with healthy heart.

A 2004 study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* indicated that a weight-loss diet containing moderate amounts of peanuts or peanut butter in place of other fats led to a better blood cholesterol profile (a higher ratio of healthful HDLs compared to LDLs) than the profiles that resulted from a low-fat diet. In the study (disclaimer: it was funded by the Peanut Institute), researchers put subjects on one of two experimental diets. The low-fat diet contained

about 20 percent of calories from fat, while the moderate-fat diet contained about 35 percent of energy from fat, with one-half of that amount coming from peanuts, peanut butter or peanut oil. While both groups' total and LDL cholesterol levels decreased during the 10-week period, those on the moderate-fat diet kept their healthy HDL levels up, while HDL levels for those on the low-fat diet decreased substantially.

Peanuts are also good sources of niacin, thiamin, phosphorus and copper. Plus, peanuts (along with egg yolks, liver, milk, cauliflower, soybeans and wheat germ) are among the best sources of a type of fat called lecithin. Lecithin contains choline, which helps the body maintain cell membranes, transmit nerve impulses, process cholesterol, and do other essential tasks.

Of course, peanuts are also one of the most common sources of severe food allergies. In fact, 3.3 million Americans are allergic to peanuts or tree nuts and can suffer anaphylactic shock, which is sometimes fatal. Anyone with a peanut allergy must take precautions not to consume any product with peanuts or peanut oil.

For everyone else, enjoying a handful of peanuts a few times a week wouldn't do any harm and could be beneficial. So, enjoy!

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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Editor:  
**March is National Peanut Month.**

This column was reviewed by Lydia Medeiros, professor in the Department of Human Nutrition in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

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