



Enjoy peanut butter but watch calories

Is peanut butter healthy for you, or is it so high in fat and calories that you should avoid it?

Peanut butter is a prime example of why “everything in moderation” is a great rule to live by.

First, let’s get the baggage out of the way: Two tablespoons of peanut butter pack in 190 calories and 16 grams of fat. That’s about as high as if you had piled on a generous 2 ounces (that’s double the normal serving size) of hard salami on a sandwich.

But that’s where the bad news ends. Although it’s high in fat, peanut butter has a high proportion of healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids — in fact, nearly 13 of those 16 grams of fat are the healthy fats you want to have in your diet to help improve cholesterol levels and gain other benefits. In fact, it’s about the ratio of good-to-bad fats that you’ll find in heart-healthy olive oil.

Most peanut butter you find on the grocery store shelf contains about 150 milligrams of sodium per serving, about 6 percent of the limit you should consume in a day. If you’re limiting sodium, that’s something to be aware of. But you should also know that peanut butter also contains potassium, which counteracts effects of too much sodium circulating in the body.

Some studies also show a decrease in the risk of Type 2 diabetes in people who consume peanut butter and other types of nuts. One study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical*

Association in 2003, showed substantially lower rates of Type 2 diabetes in women who consumed peanut butter five times or more a week compared with those who never or almost never ate peanut butter.

Peanut butter is also a good source of protein (about 8 grams in 2 tablespoons) and fiber (2 grams), both of which help you feel full longer.

Peanut butter also provides niacin, manganese, and several other vitamins and minerals. And, as a plant-based food, peanut butter offers beneficial phytochemicals that nutritional scientists are just beginning to discover.

Peanut butter is considered a safe and economical protein choice, but, of course, anyone who suffers from a peanut allergy — as do an estimated 1 in 100 children in the U.S. — should stay completely away from any peanut product. And, it’s always important to be aware of any potential food safety problems, such as the one that occurred when salmonella was discovered in peanut butter produced at one facility earlier this year. Even with that scare, though, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that peanuts used for peanut butter this past year set an all-time record at 1.1 billion pounds. The quick rebound surprised some analysts, but that just goes to show how much peanut butter remains an American staple.

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.



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