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# Want to lose weight and lower your cholesterol? Eat WALNUTS: Handful a day is 'as effective as a low fat diet'

Want to lose weight and lower your cholesterol? Eat WALNUTS: Handful a day is 'as effective as a low fat diet'

- Women who ate just over a handful every day for six months lost an average of nearly eight per cent of their initial weight
- Unlike other diet groups, those who ate nuts improved cholesterol reading

By Madlen Davies For Mail Online

Published: 18:13 GMT, 9 February 2016 | Updated: 01:31 GMT, 10 February 2016

Forget salads and green tea - it seems walnuts may be the key to losing weight.

Scientists have found that eating a diet rich in walnuts and olive oil can

lead to the same amount of weight loss as a lower fat, higher carbohydrate diet.

Even better, walnuts, which are rich in polyunsaturated fats, are beneficial to heart health and lower cholesterol, they say.

In light of the findings, the study recommends eating a handful of them a day.

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A diet rich in walnuts and olive oil can lead to the same amount of weight loss as a lower fat, higher carbohydrate diet, new research has revealed

Study author Dr Cheryl Rock, of the San Diego School of Medicine at the University of California, said she was surprised by the results.

'One of the surprising findings of this study was even though walnuts are higher in fat and calories, the walnut-rich diet was associated with the same degree of weight loss as a lower fat diet.

'Considering the results of this study, as well as previous walnut research on heart health and weight, there's something to be said for eating a handful of walnuts a day.'

To come to this conclusion, the team studied 245 overweight and obese women aged between 22 and 72, who were enrolled in a one-year weight loss programme.

They were randomly assigned to three different diets: a lower fat and higher carbohydrate diet; a lower carbohydrate and higher fat diet, or a walnut-rich, higher fat and lower carbohydrate diet.

Those prescribed a walnut-rich diet consumed around 43g (1.5 ounces) of the nuts a day - about a handful and a half.

After six months, women across all groups lost an average of nearly eight per cent of their initial weight.

Those eating a walnut-rich diet lost similar amounts of weight to the other groups - but also showed more improvements in their cholesterol levels when compared to the other two groups.

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Specifically, the level of 'bad' LDL cholesterol fell, while 'good' HDL cholesterol increased.

This was especially noticeable in the women who were insulin-resistant, a precursor of diabetes.

The key to these findings, the researchers believe, is that the low-carb high-fat diet group were encouraged to consume foods higher in monounsaturated fats, found in a variety of foods and oils.

Studies show eating foods rich in monounsaturated fatty acids improves blood cholesterol levels, which can decrease the risk of heart disease. However, the walnut-rich diet provided more polyunsaturated fats.

## **HOW NUTS CAN STAVE OFF DEATH**

Snacking on just half a handful of nuts a day can cut the risk of dying from a string of major diseases.

Researchers at Maastricht University found eating at least 10g of nuts or peanuts per day led to a lower risk of dying from respiratory disease, such

as asthma and emphysema, and neurodegenerative diseases such as dementia.

It also reduced the risk of diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases, which include heart attacks and strokes.

However, researchers found no protective effect from eating peanut butter. They explained this may be because the salt and vegetable oils it contains 'cancel out' the beneficial effects of the nuts.

Walnuts are the only nut in which the fat is primarily polyunsaturated, including a significant amount of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA).

ALA is the plant-derived form of omega-3 fatty acid, which is essential to the body's healthy functioning.

The body cannot make omega-3 itself, therefore it must be wholly obtained from the diet, meaning many of us are deficient.

However, Dr Rock conceded there were some limitations to the study, such as it only included women, so the results may not be generalizable to men.

In addition, it did not measure adherence to the diets, although it seems the women stuck to them considering their weight loss.

'In addition to these findings, we hope to explore the effect of walnuts on satiety, as we believe satiety is a critical factor for maintaining weight loss,' Dr Rock concluded.

The study, published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, comes after research from Harvard also showed the health benefits of consuming polyunsaturated fats.

The study suggested that people who replace saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats may live longer and have a lower risk of heart

disease.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3439155/Want-lose-weight-lower-cholesterol-Eat-WALNUTS-Handful-day-effective-low-fat-diet.html#ixzz408gGZYgy>

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