

Nuts about nuts: Are some better for health than others? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

Are some nuts better for you than others? I like almonds and cashews.

— Nuts for nuts

Answer

Dear Nuts for nuts,

What did one squirrel say to the other squirrel? "I'm nuts about you!" One variety of nut isn't necessarily healthier or better than another. Unless you have an allergy or sensitivity to one or more kinds, all nuts, when substituted for foods high in saturated fat, are healthy. While individual types vary in nutrients, most nuts contain an array of vitamins and minerals, such as iron, magnesium, zinc, vitamin E, and small amounts of folate, copper, phosphorous, and calcium. They may also contribute to one's daily protein and fiber needs.

Nuts are calorie dense foods, meaning they pack a lot of calories into a small amount of food. This can be helpful for people trying to gain weight, but that doesn't mean they have to be off limits to those watching their waistlines. For example, one ounce (oz.) of most nuts equals about 18 to 24 nuts (a small handful for many and a tiny handful for larger-handed folks), and contains between 165 and 200 calories. The majority of the calories in nuts is derived from their unsaturated fats — specifically, monounsaturated fat ^[2] — which is more healthful than saturated fat. You might add nuts to your diet by substituting nuts for snacks higher in saturated fats or adding it as part of your meal. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Make your grains even greater:** Mix sliced nuts into plain rice, rice pilaf, oatmeal, or couscous.
- **Get 'em on your greens:** Top your veggies or salads with slivered nuts.
- **Add a little crunch to a creamy treat:** Use slivered or chopped nuts as a yogurt topping.
- **Spruce up a savory dish:** Add chopped nuts to curries, casseroles, or soups.

When deciding on your nut of choice, you can maximize on the nutritional benefits by keeping in mind which nuts are rich in different nutrients. If you're looking for that protein punch, peanuts

and almonds have the highest amount with seven grams and six grams, respectively. Almonds and cashews, which you mentioned as favorites, both contain seven grams of calcium. You can add peanuts and almonds to your diet if you want some extra vitamin E, and pecans and cashews are probably your best bet if you want to add in more zinc. Some nuts are roasted in oil, which adds fat and calories without adding additional vitamins or minerals. In addition, some nuts are salted, which may greatly contribute to one's daily sodium intake. Based on that information, nuts of the unsalted and dry roasted variety may be the best health bang for your buck.

In conclusion, it's great that you're nuts about nuts. No ifs, ands, or nuts about it!

Alice!

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