

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Almonds for the Healthy

My sister used to comment with sisterly rivalry when I was eating nuts “Nuts for the Nutty”. Now however, it’s nuts for the healthy. The FDA allows a qualified health claim on the packages of some nuts saying the evidence suggests, but does not prove, that eating nuts might lower your risk of heart disease. There’s also some evidence to show that people who eat nuts have a lower risk of getting diabetes. How much you need, how much is good, and how many calories you can afford are other questions!

Almonds are one of the healthier nuts. Producers are allowed to put the FDA statement on packages of almonds. The 163 calories in each ounce of almonds comes mainly from unsaturated fats and oils. These are the healthier kinds of fats. Most of the oil in almonds is monounsaturated, similar to olive oil, and the best kind. These are the ones that lower our risk of heart disease by lowering our bad cholesterol levels. Some studies show that people who eat 1 to 3 ounces of nuts a day can cut their risk of heart disease almost in half.

Another nutrient that travels with the fat is vitamin E. Most of us only get about half of the 15 mg of vitamin E that is recommended for our best health. E is one of the antioxidant vitamins, helping to prevent cell and DNA damage. One ounce of almonds would give us about half of the recommended amount. The vitamin E in almonds is in the best form for us to absorb, another benefit.

Besides having the good kind of fat, and tasting very good, almonds have other benefits. They have the most calcium of any nut. For people who can’t drink milk or

use dairy products, almonds can be one source of calcium. Calcium is necessary for strong bones, of course. But calcium is also a key player in the balance of minerals that controls our blood pressure.

The other mineral in the blood pressure balance besides sodium is potassium. Sodium tends to increase blood pressure, calcium and potassium tend to lower it. Only pistachios have more potassium than almonds.

A third mineral in almonds, magnesium, is more closely associated with diabetes and insulin levels. Magnesium helps to balance insulin and glucose in our blood. A study of almost 84,000 women compared their diets and diseases. The 3,000 plus women who developed diabetes in the 16 years of the study were those who ate less nuts. It's not a proof, but it's a good suggestion.

All these benefits - good fats, good minerals - plus high fiber are probably responsible for yet another interesting study result. People who cut their calories to lose weight, but included almonds in their diets, lost more weight than those who didn't eat almonds. The diabetics in the study found that they needed less insulin too. That was partly due to the weight loss, but doctors seemed to think there might be something more in the almonds that helped.

The problem of course is all the calories in any nut, including almonds. It's tricky to take calories out of other parts of your diet when you add nuts into it. And it's tricky to limit yourself to a one ounce serving when nuts taste so good. If you don't want to be carrying a scale around to measure them, use one of the little metal boxes those strong mint candies come in. The amount of nuts in one tin is just about one ounce. Stick to that many a day, and enjoy the benefits.

This week's recipe demonstrates another way to limit your nuts. Just use them

to add some crunch and sweetness to another dish. You'll use less and won't have the jar or can sitting beside you tempting you to take another handful. Enjoy!

Almond Crab Salad Wraps

1 can (6 ½ oz) crab meat	1 hard-cooked egg, diced
1 C sliced celery	2 Tbsp diced pimento
½ C blanched, slivered almonds	1/3 C low-fat mayonnaise
1 Tbsp lemon juice	Dash of Tabasco
1 bag washed salad greens	4 flour tortillas, warmed

Toast almonds in skillet or oven until golden brown and fragrant. Flake crab and check for pieces of shell. Combine crab, celery, egg, pimento and almonds in bowl. Stir mayonnaise, lemon juice and Tabasco to taste. Add to crab mixture and mix well.

Divide greens onto tortillas. Divide crab mixture over greens. Roll tortillas firmly around filling. Slice in half and serve, or wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for a hour to chill.

Serves 4.

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