

# Your Guide to the Healthful Benefits of Nuts

For too long, common nuts have been relegated to the cocktail hour for the occasional indulgence, and dieters have avoided them for fear of fat. In *Healthy Nuts: Your Guide to the Healthful Benefits of Nuts* (Avery/Putnam; March 6, 2000), Gene Spiller, Ph.D., reveals that nuts are actually packed with tremendous nutritional benefits. The newly released book was sponsored by INC.

*Healthy Nuts* reveals that nuts can play an important role in delivering protein, especially in a vegetarian diet. All of the tree nuts reviewed in *Healthy Nuts*, including almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios, and walnuts are high in fat – but unsaturated fat, the “good” fat, which, when it replaces saturated fat, helps lower blood cholesterol.

According to John Westerdahl, MPH, RD, CNS, Director of Health Promotion and Nutritional Services, Castle Medical Center, Kailua, Hawaii and Nutrition Editor, Veggie Life Magazine, “Dr. Spiller’s *Healthy Nuts* is the best book yet on the health and nutritional benefits of nuts.”

Nuts are good sources of plant fiber and antioxidants. Many phytonutrients, plant-based compounds that are beneficial for a wide range of health conditions, are found in abundance in nuts. And perhaps equally important, nuts can satisfy the desire for fatty foods when used to replace high-fat foods that lack nuts’ nutritional benefits.

Gene Spiller, Ph.D., is the founder of the Health Research and Studies Center and the Sphera Foundation, organizations dedicated to health and nutritional research. For the past two decades he has been a consultant to the food, vitamin, and pharmaceutical industries, including a researcher for many INC groups. He is the author of eight books, including *The Super Pyramid Eating Program* (Time Books/Random House) and lives in the San Francisco Bay area.

In the “Foreword” of *Healthy Nuts*, Dr. John Farquahar, M.D., Professor of Medicine and Director, Stanford University Wellness Center, says:

“While nuts have numerous health benefits, they have not been recognized as being important to nutrition due to lack of awareness of these benefits. Consumption of a moderate amount of different types of nuts can help prevent chronic disease, including coronary heart disease and various kinds of cancer. As

we move toward a balanced plant-based diet, the decrease in protein intake that occurs when one leaves behind animal products can be more than adequately compensated for by the excellent quality of protein present in nuts. This balance that nuts can provide is one of the great advantages of adding nuts to a plant-based diet. The protein in nuts is a high-quality mixture of amino acids, which can complement those obtained from other foods. There is some evidence that plant protein, in and of itself, can lower blood cholesterol. And all the tree nuts you will find in this book are high in unsaturated fat, which does not raise blood cholesterol and, when it replaces saturated fat, lowers blood cholesterol.

Another benefit of nuts in nutrition is that nuts are very low in saturated fats – fats that are an important contributor to high blood cholesterol, atherosclerosis, and coronary heart disease – and they do not contain cholesterol.

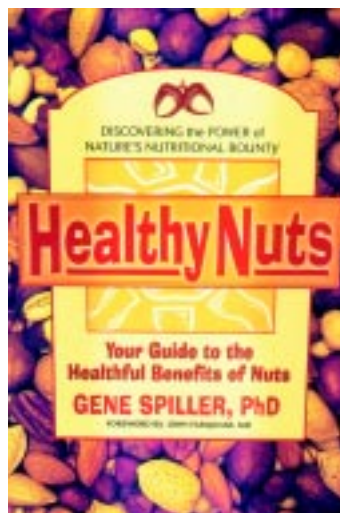
Nuts are good sources of plant fiber, plant sterols, and antioxidants. Both plant fiber and plant sterols can play a role in lowering cholesterol. Plant sterols are a much ignored element in human nutrition, which, even in low doses, have been shown to inhibit cholesterol absorption and have benefits in the prevention of coronary heart disease. Antioxidants may help prevent the oxidation of blood cholesterol, which is particularly harmful.

Not less important for people who are used to eating fatty foods, nuts can satisfy that desire when used as snacks to replace other fatty foods, such as cheese or butter. They can also add a burst of flavor to low-

fat, blander foods.

I have mentioned just a few of the many reasons why nuts should plan an important, beneficial role in your diet. In this book, you will find facts that will place nuts in the proper light.”

Dr. Spiller continues in his “introduction” to outline the various sections of his book: “Nuts are among the most fascinating foods we have, and this book will show that tree nuts are superfoods and among the healthiest foods. Tree nuts are ancient foods that have fed humanity through the ages, before the beginning of farming when people gathered food for survival. Later, as agriculture began to supply more and more of our staple foods, nuts continued to be an important part of the diet.



Then, in the second half of the twentieth century, something happened, and people, bombarded by messages that they should consume a diet low in fat, began to eat fewer nuts. For some people, nuts have become a food of doubtful healthful properties and an undesirable food rather than a treasure chest of good nutrition. Yes, nuts are superfoods, and this book will prove it. It's amazing that there is no popular book written exclusively about nuts that brings to the public the history, life, lore, and health benefits of tree nuts, with a major focus on the key role that nuts play in a good diet. At the beginning of a new millennium, nuts need to be re-established as a great healthful food.

*Healthy Nuts* will drive home the concept that there are *good fats* and that we should look at whole, unrefined foods, such as nuts, as the sum of a multitude of compounds, all with their special benefits. This book will show the reader the health benefits of nuts and how nuts should be a regular part of the diet. It will help to bring into focus the role of good fats in the diet with quotes from leading researchers such as Drs. Walter Willett, (Harvard), Gary Fraser and Joan Sabate, (Loma Linda University), Antonia Trichopoulou (University of Athens, Greece), David Jenkins (University of Toronto), and others.

**Part One** opens with the intriguing history of the early quest for food by primitive societies in Chapter 1. Later in this chapter, we follow nuts through the centuries, and we start our search for superfoods for the new millennium by discovering the power in a seed. But can a food fairly high in fat be a healthy food? In Chapter 2, we will untangle the fat maze and show that there

About his book, Dr. Spiller explains his motivation for writing *Healthy Nuts* in his "Preface":

"One day I set out in an earnest attempt to find the *good fats*. I tried to learn all I could about them: I set up clinical studies, I went to medical meetings, I read specific publications, and I discussed diet and fats with the experts. That day I started on a long, tortuous journey to find out all I could about fat in the diet – how good or bad fats were for us and how much or how little of them we should consume. I discovered published papers in medical journals and medical books...but something wasn't quite right – something was missing.

There was something elusive about this whole picture. Scientists had made many discoveries about fats, and yet there were almost insurmountable gaps. The debate on how much or how little fat should be in the diet was far from over: all the researchers seemed to have a good point in their claims for lower or not-so-low fat consumption. Why then such a lack of agreement? What was missing in our knowledge, in our approach?

I felt I was caught up in a mystery, and the solution evaded me. Then the idea came to me that perhaps the current research on fats was good for expanding our basic scientific knowledge and as a valuable starting point, but it was not enough to give to the public sound recommendations on fats. It came to me that in everyday life, we eat whole, extremely complex foods containing hundreds of compounds, not isolated fats or proteins or carbohydrates.

In my search, nuts appeared to be a good example of a food that is extremely complex, very rich in a wide array of valuable compounds and, yes, certainly rich in good fats as well. Yet this great food was set aside by many people who thought of it as a high-fat food. This did not make sense at all, considering that in the 1980s researchers at Loma Linda University in California had found that most of those eating a handful of nuts a day had less heart disease than low or no nut eaters.... Since that time, many other studies have confirmed that nuts are a great and unique health food.

Nuts became for me a key example of the need to study whole foods in addition to single nutrients in isolation. It seemed to me that a book on nuts that was easy to read for everyone and that included their history, lore, and their role in a good diet and in good nutrition with as little medical jargon as possible was needed. Such a book could not only help find the proper place for nuts in our diets, but also help to bring about the idea that we should look at foods as a whole rather than making our choices based exclusively on single components....

As my search continued, I realized that nuts were not just an acceptable food, they were truly one of our superfoods, that not only can be, but should be part of our diet. I hope that you will find in this book concepts that go beyond nuts, concepts that give you the key to designing meals and snacks for ultimate health."

are many good fats that not only can be but should be part of a healthy diet. You will learn that the ultimate way to consume these good fats is as part of whole plant foods such as nuts and seeds. Chapter 3 tells us about the benefits of other nutrients in nuts and how they interact with fats, reaching the conclusion that we should judge the healthfulness of a food by studying all of its components. Chapter 4 shows how nuts can be protective against chronic diseases with some stunning evidence from major population studies and controlled clinical research.

**In Part Two**, you will discover the origin of common tree nuts on every continent of the world not covered by ice. Each of the following chapters covers specific nuts: almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, and walnuts.

**In Part Three**, you will learn how to make nuts part of a healthy diet, with hints and suggestions on the uses of nuts.

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I

enjoyed writing it, and that you walk away from it realizing just how important nuts are to a healthy, well-rounded diet."

For a copy of *Healthy Nuts*, please contact Ken Siman, Avery Publicity Director, at 212/366-2519, fax 212/366-2670, [ksiman@penguinputnam.com](mailto:ksiman@penguinputnam.com).

