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# TREE NUT CONSUMPTION ASSOCIATED WITH BETTER DIET, LOWER BODY WEIGHT MEASURES AND LOWER PREVALENCE OF HEALTH RISKS

## New Findings on Nut Consumption in the U.S. presented at the American Dietetic Association's Annual Meeting in Denver, CO

DAVIS, CA, October 16, 2009 – In a study presented at the American Dietetic Association Food and Nutrition Conference and Exposition (FNCE) in Denver, CO, researchers looked at the association of tree nut (almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts) consumption with nutrient intake, dietary adequacy, health parameters and the prevalence of risk factors for metabolic syndrome. Tree nut consumption was associated with a higher overall diet quality score, improved nutrient intakes, lower body weight measures and lower prevalence of health risks.

"We know nuts can help reduce the risk of heart disease and other chronic illnesses, but no recent studies using a nationally representative U.S. population have examined the prevalence of tree nut consumption with diet and health risk factors," stated Victor Fulgoni, Ph.D., lead researcher on the study. "Because of the nature of this study we cannot infer cause and effect. However, one of the more interesting findings was the fact that tree nut consumers had lower body weights, body mass index and waist circumference compared to non-consumers." The actual amounts were -4.19 pounds, -0.9kg/$m^2$ and -0.83 inches respectively.

The study looked at 13,292 men and women (19+ years) participating in the 1999-2004 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES). Intake was from 24-hour recall data and tree nut consumers were defined as those who consumed ≥ ¼ ounce/day. The results showed that in

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addition to lower body weights, tree nut consumers had higher intakes of calories and total fat but less saturated fat than non-consumers. Tree nut consumers also consumed more fiber, vitamin E, calcium, magnesium and potassium (key shortfall nutrients in U.S. adults) compared to non-consumers, but consumed less sodium.

While LDL cholesterol was similar in both groups, the tree nut consumers had higher HDL cholesterol and lower levels of C-reactive protein, a marker of inflammation which can lead to a variety of chronic diseases including heart disease. Consumption of tree nuts was also associated with a lower prevalence of metabolic syndrome, which, on a population basis, could lead to better health and lower long-term healthcare costs.

Moreover, though tree nut consumption in the U.S. population is relatively low (mean intake of 1.19 ounces/day for nut consumers) nutrient intakes and diet quality were significantly improved when tree nuts were consumed. The latter appear to be associated with a greater intake of whole grains, fruits, and less saturated fat, sodium and calories from solid fats, alcohol and added sugars. As a result, Dr. Fulgoni recommends, "Tree nuts should be an integral part of a healthy diet and encouraged by health professionals—especially registered dietitians."

Maureen Ternus, M.S., R.D., Executive Director of the International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research & Education Foundation (INC NREF), adds, "In light of this new data and the fact that the FDA has issued a qualified health claim for nuts and heart disease with a recommended intake of 1.5 ounces of nuts per day, we need to educate people about the importance of including nuts in the diet."

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The International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research & Education Foundation (INC NREF) represents the research and education arm of the International Tree Nut Council (INC). INC is an international, non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to supporting nutrition research and education for consumers and health professionals throughout the world and promoting new product development for tree nut products. Members include those associations and organizations that represent the nine tree nuts (almonds, Brazils, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts,

pistachios and walnuts) in more than 40 producing countries. For more information, please visit our website at www.nuthealth.org.

*Editor's Note:* **Available:**

- Full study abstract
- Complete tree nut research reference list
- Interviews with Victor Fulgoni, PhD. and Maureen Ternus, M.S., R.D.