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WHY YOU SHOULD EAT NUTS EACH DAY

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JUST like you should aim for two pieces of fruit and five serves of vegetables a day, a small handful of nuts should be a part of your daily healthy eating habits, too. Unfortunately, the average intake of nuts is just under 5g a day. So, ahead of Nut Day tomorrow, I'm setting a target of 30g of nuts, every single day. Up for the challenge?

GOOD NEWS

From almonds to macadamias to hazelnuts to walnuts, nuts are oh-so-good for you. While different nuts offer different health perks, they all offer a mix of heart-healthy fats, plant-based protein and gut-loving fibre. What's more, nuts contain compounds such as vitamin E and polyphenols, which have disease-fighting antioxidant properties.

HEALTH PERKS

Research has shown that eating more nuts is associated with a reduced risk of heart disease, improved cholesterol levels, reduced risk of diabetes and certain cancers, mood improvement and better gut health thanks to their prebiotics which feed the good bacteria in your gut.

AND WHAT ABOUT WEIGHT LOSS?

The good news is, nuts aren't going to make you gain weight. In fact, they could help you maintain a healthy weight. Yes, nuts are rich in energy-dense fats, but new research has shown that a significant proportion of their kilojoules aren't actually absorbed by your body. What's more, the hungerbusting trio of protein, fats and fibre that nuts contain will keep you feeling full and can help to control hunger.

HOW TO EAT MORE

Here are some of my favourite ways to reach a healthy handful a day:

- Add a handful of macadamias to your morning muesli, yoghurt and fruit
- Add almonds to a smoothie made of milk, yoghurt, banana and berries
- Top roasted pumpkin wedges with goats cheese with toasted pine nuts
- Scatter walnuts over a salad made of pear, avocado and rocket
- Whip up a batch of Sunday morning pancakes with almond meal, banana, egg and chia seeds
- Blitz pine nuts with breadcrumbs and parmesan cheese for a crust for fish

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