

NUTRITION

Consuming nuts frequently might help extend life

Frequent nut consumption is associated with a reduced risk of total and cause-specific mortality, reveal data published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Nuts are rich sources of unsaturated fatty acids, high-quality protein, vitamins, minerals and fibre, and might have anti-inflammatory, anticarcinogenic and antioxidant properties. Association studies have reported health benefits of increased nut consumption, including a reduced risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes mellitus and colon cancer. However, only limited evidence of the association between nut intake and mortality is available.

Bao and co-investigators examined the association between frequency of nut consumption and total and cause-specific mortality in 76,464 women in the Nurses' Health Study and 42,498 men in the Health Professionals Follow-up Study who were followed up for 30 years and 24 years, respectively. Participants had no

history of cancer, heart disease or stroke at baseline.

Individuals provided information on their frequency of nut consumption in validated food-frequency questionnaires completed at baseline and every 2–4 years for the duration of the study. Participants were asked if during the previous year they had consumed a serving of nuts never or almost never, less than once per week, once per week, two to four times per week, five or six times per week, or seven or more times per week.

During follow-up, 16,200 deaths were reported in women from the Nurses' Health Study and 11,229 in men from the Health Professionals Follow-up Study. In a pooled analysis of women and men, frequency of nut consumption was inversely associated with total mortality, after adjustment for a number of potential lifestyle and dietary confounders. For example, the death rate was 11% or 20% lower in participants who ate a portion of



nuts once per week or seven or more times per week, respectively, compared with those who did not eat nuts. Inverse associations were also found for frequency of nut consumption and deaths related to cancer, heart disease and respiratory disease.

The researchers comment that individuals need not be concerned about weight gain associated with frequent nut consumption because in the two cohorts studied, increased nut consumption was associated with reduced weight gain.

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Original article Bao, Y. *et al.* Association of nut consumption with total and cause-specific mortality. *N. Engl. J. Med.* 369, 2001–2011 (2013)