



# Discover the Health Benefits of Walnuts

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Vitality Walnuts  
White Paper  
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AUSTRALIAN  
WALNUTS

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Walnuts are versatile little wonders with a history as ancient as time. They have been a part of the human diet for thousands of years and have been praised for their health-giving properties. As one of nature's most nutritious foods, walnuts have an enviable nutrient profile: high in fibre, healthy fats, vitamins and minerals. These nutrients support the body in many ways and have various health benefits. Whether tossed in a salad, blitzed into walnut butter, blended as walnut milk, or simply enjoyed as a crunchy snack, walnuts provide a nutritious way to incorporate good health into your diet. Let's explore their origins and discover how the naturally abundant nutrients in walnuts help them embrace the adage "food is medicine."

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## The ancient roots of walnuts

The English Walnut, also known as *Juglans regia*, comes from Iran and parts of central Asia. As far back as the 9th Century during the Byzantine era, walnuts were known as the 'royal nut'. It wasn't long before the popularity of walnuts grew across Europe, the United Kingdom and America, where many countries and cultures have since enjoyed them.

Walnuts are botanically similar to drupes or stone fruit. However, they have a two-sided edible seed, which further likens them to fruit rather than a proper nut. The soft outer brown skin protects the inner part of the walnut seed, which is rich in vitamins and antioxidants. Inside the skin, you'll find the fleshy part of the seed, which contains polyunsaturated fats. These fats are sensitive to oxygen and extreme heat. So, handling and storing walnuts properly is essential to keep them fresh and preserve their nutritional value.

## Nature's insights into the benefits of walnuts

Have you ever looked closely at a walnut? The next time you come across one, take a moment to check it out. It's fascinating how much it resembles the human brain. The shape, the division of two hemispheres, and the wrinkles all reflect the structure of our brain. Even more interesting is that both the brain and walnuts are primarily composed of polyunsaturated fats.

Here, walnuts are a great example of an ancient holistic medicine concept known as the “Doctrine of Signatures.” This concept is based on the notion that nature has hidden wisdom and shows that plants, herbs and food may have natural healing properties. We can get hints about these properties from its colour, structure and shape. Isn’t it incredible how Mother Nature works her magic?

Now that we’ve explored some of the history, let’s take a look at the nutrients and health benefits of walnuts.

## Nutritional value of walnuts

100 grams of walnuts contains approximately:

- 15grams of protein
- 7grams of fibre
- 65grams of healthy fats (including omega-3 fatty acids)
- 13grams of carbohydrates

## Vitamins and Minerals

- B vitamins
- Vitamin E
- Magnesium
- Calcium
- Iron
- Manganese
- Potassium
- Zinc
- Phytochemicals

## Essential Fatty Acid profile

100grams of walnuts contains approximately 65grams of healthy fats comprising:

- Saturated: 7grams
- Monounsaturated: 10grams
- Polyunsaturated: 48grams
  - Omega 3: 10grams
  - Omega 6: 38grams

Walnuts have the highest polyunsaturated fat content of all nuts. Walnuts also boast a high protein and mineral content. This makes them a nutrient-dense food, providing our bodies with essential nutrients crucial for our overall health and well-being.

## Health benefits of walnuts

Walnuts are highly valued for their therapeutic properties, which is no surprise given their long history of consumption. Traditional medicine physicians used walnuts to treat digestive issues, skin problems, and even toothaches. Scientific research now highlights the composition of and nutrients in walnuts, so we can appreciate why they were held in such high regard over history.

## The anti-inflammatory nut

Walnuts have a unique combination of nutrients that provide a synergistic anti-inflammatory effect in the body. Sure, low-grade inflammation is important for repair and regeneration. Inflammation is the immune system’s natural response to safeguard the body against foreign invaders. However, prolonged inflammation can contribute to a range of health problems, including chronic pain, heart disease and brain degeneration. So it’s important to include foods that offset some of this inflammation, and walnuts fit the bill perfectly.

Let’s look deeper at the research on walnuts and how they benefit human health.

## Walnuts improve brain health cognition and memory

The most well-touted health benefit of walnuts is supporting brain health and cognition. Several studies demonstrate the connection between increased walnut consumption and improved brain function. Some research indicates that walnuts may even help prevent age-related cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s disease.

Walnuts have a unique protective role in the brain due to the high levels of polyunsaturated omega-3 fatty acids and plant phytochemicals. These nutrients help reduce oxidative stress, lower inflammation and protect against brain cell damage.

An interesting discovery suggests that the most favourable health outcomes occur among the elderly population, as recent research indicates. A study involving a group

of elderly participants who consumed 15g of walnuts daily experienced a significant enhancement in cognitive function and memory.

Another remarkable study conducted over twenty years revealed a striking variance in cognition scores between women who consumed five or more servings of walnuts per week and those who did not. This study echoes the existing data that regular walnut consumption has profound cognitive benefits over the lifespan.

## Sleep and Mood

Walnuts possess the plant compound phytomelatonin, which has anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective and anti-cancer properties. This phytochemical mimics melatonin, which is the neurotransmitter responsible for regulating sleep, mood and behaviour. The combination of phytomelatonin and polyunsaturated fats gives walnuts another superpower quality - as a potential natural antidepressant. This finding was validated by a small 6-week trial involving walnut supplementation among a group of healthy young men.

## Walnuts help maintain a healthy heart

Walnuts have been associated with improved heart health due to their high levels of omega-3 fatty acids. These healthy fats can help reduce inflammation in the body, which is a major risk factor for heart disease. Additionally, walnuts also contain a compound called ellagic acid, which has been shown to have protective effects against heart disease. Research has also found that incorporating walnuts into the diet can help lower 'bad' cholesterol levels and improve blood pressure, further promoting heart health.

A recent two-year study involving a large group of elderly participants looked at the impact of eating walnuts on cholesterol levels. Those who consumed walnuts experienced a decrease in triglyceride levels, improving their overall cardiovascular health. Walnuts are a heart-healthy nut to be enjoyed

by anyone interested in looking after their cardiovascular system.

## Walnuts support weight management and gut health

Like most nuts, walnuts have exhibited benefits in aiding in healthy weight management. The healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats and natural fibre in walnuts are linked to a reduced risk of obesity. A study involving 100 overweight men found that including walnuts in the diet improved BMI scores. Research shows that these nutrients can also help improve satiety, reduce unhealthy cravings and overeating, and promote a healthy gut microbiome by feeding beneficial bacteria.

## How to incorporate walnuts in your diet

Given the numerous health benefits of walnuts, it's worth incorporating these little treasures into your diet. Below are some simple and delicious ways to enjoy walnuts:

1. **Smoothies:** Blend a handful of walnuts into your morning smoothie for added texture and nutrition.
2. **Baking:** Incorporate walnuts into your baking recipes like muffins, cookies, and bread for an added crunch.
3. **Breakfast:** Top your porridge or yoghurt with walnuts for a satisfying and healthy start to your day.
4. **Salads:** Sprinkle chopped walnuts on your salads for a delightful crunch and a nutritional boost.
5. **Snacking:** Simply eat a handful of raw or roasted walnuts as a nutritious snack between meals.
6. **Trail Mix:** Combine walnuts with other nuts, dried fruit, and a touch of dark chocolate for an energy-boosting trail mix.
7. **Walnut butter:** Instead of regular peanut butter, try walnut butter as a healthy alternative for your toast or sandwiches.
8. **Walnut milk:** For a dairy-free option, enjoy some healthy walnut milk.

## Healthy recipes with walnuts

Ready to start incorporating more walnuts into your diet? Here are four delicious and nutritious recipes to try.

### Warm Walnut and Quinoa Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- 1/4 cup walnuts, chopped
- 1/2 avocado, diced
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- Handful of cherry tomatoes, halved
- Handful of fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. In a large bowl, mix together the cooked quinoa, walnuts, avocado, red onion, cherry tomatoes, and fresh herbs.
2. Drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice and toss to combine.
3. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Serve warm as a side dish, or add protein for a complete meal.

### Chocolate Walnut Energy Bites

Ingredients:

- 1 cup pitted dates
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup walnuts
- 1/4 cup cacao powder
- Pinch of salt

Instructions:

1. In a food processor, blend together the dates, oats, walnuts, cacao powder, and salt until they form a sticky mixture.
2. Roll into bite-sized balls.
3. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week or freeze for longer storage.

### Walnut Butter Banana Toast

Ingredients:

- 2 slices of whole-grain toast
- 2 tablespoons of walnut butter
- 1 banana, sliced
- A sprinkle of chia seeds
- A drizzle of honey (optional)

Instructions:

1. Toast your bread slices to your preferred level of crispness.
2. Spread the walnut butter evenly on each slice of toast.
3. Arrange banana slices on top of the walnut butter.
4. Sprinkle with chia seeds, and if desired, drizzle with a touch of honey for added sweetness.
5. Enjoy this nutrient-packed breakfast or snack right away.

### Walnut Milk Chia Pudding

Ingredients:

- 1 cup walnut milk
- 3 tablespoons chia seeds
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup or honey (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Toppings: Fresh fruit, coconut flakes, additional walnuts

Instructions:

1. In a glass or jar, combine the walnut milk, chia seeds, sweetener (if using), and vanilla extract.
2. Stir well to ensure there are no clumps of chia seeds.
3. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or overnight if possible, until the chia seeds have absorbed the walnut milk and the mixture has a pudding-like texture.
4. Top your chia pudding with fresh fruits, coconut flakes, and some extra walnuts for added crunch.
5. Enjoy this nutritious and delicious walnut milk chia pudding as a healthy breakfast or refreshing snack.

## Boost your health and vitality with walnuts

The versatility of walnuts is truly impressive. Walnuts are a nutritional powerhouse with numerous health benefits. Incorporating walnuts into your diet is a great way to reduce inflammation and naturally promote overall health and well-being. From heart and brain health to weight management and improved gut health, these humble nuts have a tonne of research that supports their health-giving claims.

Walnuts are easy to enjoy as part of your everyday diet, either as a snack, pulverised into butter, adorned in a cake or as a simple walnut milk drink. So go ahead and start reaping the benefits of walnuts today! Give yourself a delicious and nutritious boost; your body will thank you!

### About the Author

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Elise is an experienced natural medicine practitioner who has worked in the health industry for over 15 years. She has a diploma in remedial massage and a bachelor of health science in nutritional medicine from the Endeavour College of Natural Health. Throughout her career, she has helped many people achieve better health and wellness, with a particular interest in women's and maternal health.



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