Walnuts, Weight Loss, and Blood Lipids

By James J. Kenney, PhD, FACN

The optimal ratio of fat/carbohydrate/protein for promoting healthy weight loss is still a matter of debate. Some researchers have suggested higher fat, lower carbohydrate diets are better for weight loss in insulin resistant people. It is known that the amount and type of dietary carbohydrates and fats can alter plasma lipids in ways that may increase or decrease coronary artery disease (CAD). Weight loss and exercise can also favorably impact many known and suspected CAD risk factors including dyslipidemia and insulin resistance (IR). To better understand how diet composition affects weight loss and blood lipids, Dr. Cheryl Rock and colleagues at UC San Diego examined more than 200 overweight and obese women (mean weight 90Kg and mean age 50y) who were enrolled in a 1-year behavioral weight loss intervention program.

None of the subjects had type 2 diabetes, but about half of them had elevated fasting insulin levels and homeostatic model assessment (HOMA) scores that indicated they were insulin resistant (1).

All subjects were randomly assigned to one of three diet groups. All three diet groups were instructed to follow a diet with about 1500kcal (+ or -300kcal) per day. Participants were given a detailed diet prescription and sample meal plans during individual counseling sessions. The overall goal of the dietary guidance was to reduce energy intake, “aiming for a 500- to 1,000-kcal/day deficit relative to expenditure.” Participants were also encouraged to use a web-based diet tracking system and were given a pedometer and encouraged to walk at least 10,000 steps per day (2).

One group was instructed to consume a lower fat (20% energy), higher carbohydrate (65% energy) diet [LF]; a sec-

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The results showed serum triglycerides fell significantly in all three diet groups. Insulin sensitivity increased and C-reactive protein levels dropped by a similar amount in all 3 diet groups.

The LF group saw a significant drop in TC but also a significant drop in HDL-C, especially for the more insulin-sensitive women (P<0.05).

Insulin sensitivity increased and C-reactive protein levels dropped by a similar amount in all 3 diet groups. However, the HOMA scores of the IR subjects on the HF-2 diet fell about half as much as it did in the other two diet groups.

Specific dietary instructions for the LF diet included choosing lean protein sources and reduced-fat dairy foods; for the HF-1 diet, participants were instructed to achieve a high monounsaturated fat intake. The walnut group was instructed to eat an average of 42 g (about 1.5 oz) of walnuts per day. The group weight loss intervention included weekly meetings of participants for the first 4 months, biweekly for the next 2 months, and monthly for the last 6 months.

Confounding Variables Complicate Interpretation of Results

Were the blood lipid and insulin sensitivity changes due mainly to reduced energy intake and weight loss, to increased activity, and/or to alterations in various aspects of dietary components?

Another problem with the study is that the authors provide no data about to what degree the subjects complied with the 10,000 daily step goal. Still another limitation of the study was the lack of specific quantitative data regarding dietary intake and how well the subjects adhered to dietary instructions. Also, some data were self-reported, and restriction to women and the large number of exclusion criteria during screening suggests the results may not generalize to most of the population.

However, one thing they did validate was compliance with the walnut intake in the HF-2 group. This was confirmed by blood fat measurements that reflected their much higher intake of omega-6 and omega-3 PUFA. Compliance appeared very good perhaps because the walnuts were provided to only the HF-2 subjects at no cost by the California Walnut…

(Continued at https://foodandhealth.com/walnuts-weight-blood-lipids/)
Evaluating Weight Status

Evaluating weight status is tricky. People can be sensitive about their size, especially when they think that they may have lost control of their weight. Plus, there are lots of hurtful ways that people evaluate weight and size in society today.

So how do you address weight when it comes to health and well-being without bringing in the baggage that accompanies discussions about weight?

As you already know, a great deal of it comes down to sensitivity and personal skills. Talking with people individually and in an open and honest manner will do a lot towards addressing weight in a thoughtful and productive way.

Another element that can be helpful is science. Take value judgements out of the equation and focus instead on the science of health. What increases the risk of chronic disease like heart disease and diabetes? What will impact quality of life? Energy levels? Highlight the research that points to the benefits of managing weight as you begin an evaluation of weight status, then turn to scientific measures. BMI and waist circumference are great tools to help evaluate weight status objectively.

BMI stands for body mass index. It’s a measure of weight as it relates to height. To calculate BMI, take a person’s weight in pounds and multiply it by 703. Take their height in inches and multiply it by their height in inches again. Take the first number (weight times 703) and divide it by the second number (height squared) to get a person’s BMI. You can also use a free online BMI calculator.

Traditionally, a normal BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9, an overweight BMI is between 25 and 29.9, and an obese BMI is 30 or more. This can be a good place to start when it comes to exploring weight status.

Another way to examine that is through waist circumference. To measure waist circumference, have the person stand up straight, relax, breathe out, then gently wrap the tape measure around his or her waist. Look at the number on the tape where it reaches the end; that’s the waist circumference. Men should keep their waist circumference below 40 inches. Women should keep theirs below 35 inches. Any higher and they face additional health risks.

Using science as a starting point removes value judgments and can make it easier to thoughtfully evaluate weight status.
A Dinner That’s as Versatile as it is Tasty

Berkeley Burrito Bowl
Serves: 4 | Serving Size: About 2 cups

Ingredients:
2 cups cooked brown rice, hot
2 cups pico de gallo (dice 2 small tomatoes and combine them with chopped red onion, chopped cilantro, and a few diced peppers)
1 fresh avocado, sliced
1 cup cooked or canned black beans, hot
2 baked sweet potatoes, cubed
1/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Directions:
Divide each ingredient between 4 large and shallow individual serving bowls.

Arrange the ingredients in a circular fashion, as shown in the photo above.

Serve immediately.

Nutrition Information:
Serves 4. Each serving has 331 calories, 9 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 9 mg cholesterol, 121 mg sodium, 53 g carbohydrate, 11 g dietary fiber, 7 g sugar, and 12 g protein.

Each serving also has 255% DV vitamin A, 41% DV vitamin C, 16% DV calcium, and 11% DV iron.

Chef’s Tips:
This bowl is a great vegetarian meal. Bulk it up with bread or tortillas, or take it in a different direction by adding grilled chicken or fish.

Mix and match your own favorite ingredients into a burrito bowl. Include rice, quinoa, or couscous, beans or another lean protein, salsa, slaw, fresh veggies, and baked potatoes or sweet potatoes.

This is a great way to use up leftovers or to create a family-style platter where everyone can make their own bowl.
Update Your Spaghetti

**Meatball Directions:**

Combine the turkey, eggs, tomato paste, bread crumbs and seasonings in a large mixing bowl and mix well. Form 12 balls and bake them on a nonstick pan in a 385-degree oven until they are done, about 20 minutes. Remove from pan and place in heated pasta sauce.

**Bowl Directions:**

Pierce a spaghetti squash in several places and remove any paper labels. Place the squash in the microwave for 3 minute intervals and cook for 6-9 minutes, until soft. Allow the squash to cool. Cut in half; remove and discard seeds. Scrape the rest of the squash into a bowl.

Meanwhile, cook the angel hair according to package directions and drain. Heat the pasta sauce with the meatballs.

Assemble the dish as pictured. Place the squash in the center, then surround it with the pasta, meatballs, and sauce. Top with Parmesan and basil.

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**Spaghetti Squash Spaghetti**

*Serves: 6 | Serving Size: 1 and 3/4 cups*

**Bowl Ingredients:**

- 1 spaghetti squash
- 8 ounces angel hair pasta
- 3 cups pasta sauce
- 12 lean turkey meatballs (recipe below)
- 2 tablespoons freshly-grated Parmesan cheese
- Fresh basil

**Meatball Ingredients:**

- 1 pound lean ground turkey, very cold
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/4 cup Panko or plain bread crumbs
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- Dash paprika
Healthy Snacking: Make Your Own Trail Mix

In today’s world, kids tend to eat on the run, grazing through their day on snack foods instead of sitting at the table for a meal. Many processed snacks are high in refined grains and added sugars, and they also don’t provide the nutrients necessary for growth and optimal health.

What if there was a way for kids to get the nutrition they need from their snacks? What if their snacks contained protein, whole grains, and healthy fats?

The solution may be in the GORP.

GORP, or “good ol’ raisins and peanuts” is the original name for the trail mix that hikers and endurance athletes used as a snack to refuel when on the run (literally!). While just raisins and peanuts every day can be a bit dull, substituting or adding other ingredients can make trail mix a creative and nutritious on-the-go snack.

Follow the guidelines using the five categories below to make a tasty mix. Experiment with different flavor combinations and allow kids to build their own original recipes.

In a sealable container or bag, add in one or more of the ingredients from each category:

- **Nuts** – ¼ cup
  Almonds, peanuts, pistachios, pecans, walnut halves, macadamias, cashews

- **Seeds** – 2 tablespoons
  Sesame, sunflower, pumpkin, flax

- **Grains** - ¼ cup
  Pretzels, popcorn, puffed whole grain cereal, granola

- **Extras** - 1-2 tablespoons
  Shredded coconut, raisins, dried cherries, dried cranberries, chocolate chips

- **Seasoning** (optional) - ¼-½ teaspoons
  Cinnamon, cayenne, garlic, ginger, nutmeg

Trail mix provides healthy fats, fiber, protein, and whole grains. It is a delicious and nutrient-dense alternative to candy, chips, and most snack bars on the market. Kids will enjoy consuming this on-the-go snack, especially when they have the opportunity to create their own trail mix recipes.

*By Beth Rosen, MS, RD, CDN*
“What is the best diet for diabetes?” This is a question I hear quite a lot. Often my patients and clients expect me to give an answer such as “Mediterranean-style,” “low carb,” “vegetarian,” or “high protein.” Instead, I usually say something along these lines:

“There are many ways to a healthy plate and healthy diabetes management. We can find your best way.”

Research doesn’t support the notion that a single ideal diet exists for diabetes... or for anything else, for that matter. The best diet is any healthy plan that a person enjoys and sticks to. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends individualizing dietary guidelines based on many factors including health status, cultural and individual preferences, and economics. In their position statement, “Nutrition Therapy Recommendations for the Management of Adults with Diabetes,” the ADA specifically lists vegetarian, vegan, Mediterranean-style, DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), low-fat and low-carbohydrate eating patterns as suitable for the management of diabetes. Each of these plans should be modified based on preferences, laboratory values, and more.

Regardless of the eating plan, the ADA has a few key strategies for all people with diabetes.

- Eat portions appropriate for your current or desired weight.
- Choose nutrient-dense, health-boosting foods.
- Having diabetes significantly raises your risk for heart disease, so give adequate attention to your blood glucose, blood pressure, and blood cholesterol levels.
  - Eat lots of non-starchy vegetables, some fruit, plant-based fats like nuts and olive oil, legumes, and fish.
  - Be able to identify carbohydrate-containing foods and know their effects on your blood glucose.
    - There are various ways to control carbohydrate intake. Carbohydrate counting and the Plate Method are two popular strategies.
    - Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages.
    - Choose lean protein sources and meat alternatives.
      - The exception is to eat fatty fish for their heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.
      - Substitute unsaturated fats for solid (saturated and trans) fats.
      - Cook with oil, not butter. Substitute smashed avocado for butter in baking.
    - Limit sodium to 2,300 mg per day.
      - Enjoy herbs and spices.

Take confidence in knowing that there are many healthful eating patterns. If you need help creating your ideal diet, seek the help of a registered dietitian skilled in diabetes management.

By Jill Weisenberger, MS, RDN, CDE, FAND, CHWC
Small Shifts

The new Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) encourage us to “shift to healthier food and beverage choices.” We make choices about what to eat and drink every day. Each choice is a chance to shift to a healthier option. Over time, these small shifts will move you toward a healthy eating pattern.

The DGA looks at the typical American diet — What We Eat in America (WWEIA) — and identifies strategies for shifting to an eating pattern that promotes overall health and helps prevent chronic disease.

Small Shifts in Food Groups:

WWEIA: Three out of four Americans don’t eat the recommended amounts of fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and oils. We eat too many refined grains and not enough whole grains. Intake of meat, poultry, and eggs is also high among men and teenage boys.

Shifts: To get to a healthy eating pattern, most Americans need to shift to more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy, seafood, and oils; and shift away from refined grains and solid fats.

Examples of Food Group Shifts:

- Fruit & cereal bar to a whole piece of fruit
- Tortilla chips with cheese sauce to carrots with hummus
- Can of soda at lunch to fat-free or low-fat milk
- Steak to grilled salmon
- Ranch dressing to oil & vinegar salad dressing

Small Shifts in Nutrients of Concern:

WWEIA: By not eating enough vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and dairy products, we are at risk for low intake of calcium, potassium, dietary fiber, and vitamin D. These are key nutrients that are related to health concerns.

Shifts: The good news is that most of the shifts mentioned above will result in a healthy eating pattern that provides all the nutrients you need for overall health.

Small Shifts in Beverages:

WWEIA: Almost 20 percent of our total calorie intake comes from beverages. Sugar-sweetened drinks account for 35 percent of calories from beverages. These are calories without any nutrients.

Shift: When choosing beverages, it’s important to consider the calories and nutrients they may provide. Shift to beverages that are calorie-free — especially water — or that contribute beneficial nutrients, such as fat-free and low-fat milk and 100% juice.

By Hollis Bass, MEd, RD, LD
Happy Soy Foods Month! How will you be celebrating?

Types of Soy Foods:

There are many different types of soy foods. Some of the most common include…

- Edamame (immature soy beans)
- Soy beans
- Soy milk
- Tempeh
- Texturized vegetable protein (TVP)
- Tofu

Soy foods fall into many different MyPlate food groups. Most are considered protein foods, but fortified soy milk is often cited as an element of the dairy group. Plus, soy beans are part of the beans and peas sub-group of MyPlate, which can be considered either vegetables or protein foods.

Soy is very versatile!

Fun Soy Facts:

Soy foods can offer health benefits. According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, “Health benefits of soy products may be due to their high levels of polyunsaturated fats, fiber, minerals, vitamins, and low saturated fat content.”

That’s quite a collection of nutrients. Now let’s talk benefits. The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health asserts, “Research suggests that daily intake of soy protein may slightly lower levels of LDL (“bad”) cholesterol.” Soy is most useful when it replaces an animal protein that is higher in saturated fat.

Plus, soy foods are generally an economical and sustainable protein choice.

Soy Recipe Inspiration:

So how can you bring some soy foods into your own life? Here are a few ideas…

- Steam edamame in its pods and serve it as an appetizer or side.
- Toss some tofu into your next stir-fry.
- Whirl soy milk into a fruit smoothie.
- Grill some tempeh and use it to top a salad or roll into a veggie wrap.
- Combine silken tofu with some sugar and cocoa powder for a protein-packed chocolate mousse.
- Try some of the great rogue dishes in your local Whole Foods — this is a way to try soy without having to buy a lot of it.

By Judy Doherty, PC II