

California Walnuts

NEWSLETTER FOR DIETITIANS



SUMMER 2009



ISSUE 2

Diet and exercise that complement lifestyle are the backbone of better health

by Dr. Greg Curnew and David Tsoulis



Dr. Greg Curnew

The importance of diet and exercise for optimal health has been touted for decades, yet I still see many patients with cardiovascular diseases (CVD) that could have been prevented. As a cardiologist, I believe that we, as health professionals, can benefit if we work together to explore new strategies in the prevention of CVD.

Obesity remains a problem when it comes to my patients' health (80% of my patients are overweight) despite the available information on its link to CVD. While many diets have been scrutinized, there is still much debate over what actually works.

Many diet studies examine the outcome of the diet in terms of cardiovascular risk and adherence. Adherence is key when it comes to diet because many diets can be difficult to follow.

In one study, four popular diets (Atkins, Ornish, Weight Watchers and Zone) were compared using these criteria.¹ The study revealed that some diets can help reduce certain risk factors, but that adhering to a diet is the biggest challenge as 75 per cent of subjects abandoned their diet, due to dislike.

Lifestyle Intervention

The key is to find the right fit between diet and lifestyle. I recommend the Mediterranean diet, because it's more of a lifestyle than a diet and appears to reduce cardiac events. This diet is composed of large amounts of vegetables, legumes, fish, fruits and limited amounts of nuts. A recent meta-analysis in the British Medical Journal found a nine per cent decrease in cardiovascular mortality in patients on this diet.²

Also, preliminary findings from the PREDIMED study indicate that consuming a Mediterranean diet, supplemented with olive oil or nuts, primarily walnuts, may reduce the risk of heart attack and cardiovascular disease by up to 50 per cent.³ The findings also showed that a Mediterranean diet lowered blood pressure and decreased blood glucose levels, cholesterol, triglycerides and inflammation markers.

I like this way of eating because it emphasizes what types of fat are consumed, not how much fat is consumed overall, which I think, makes the diet more manageable to adhere to.

One of the recommendations I give to my patients is the idea of replacing four unhealthy foods with four healthy ones. One category of healthy foods that has been associated with reduced cardiovascular events are foods with omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids.⁴ Walnuts are an excellent source of a healthier fat including plant-derived omega-3 fatty acid and can be eaten in combination with other foods, such as yogurt, salads or cereals.

Offering these suggestions and changes to your patients' lifestyle can significantly lower their risk for cardiovascular events. We must all go beyond simply providing information alone, as this rarely leads to long-term changes. I welcome your ideas and suggestions. Please share your successes and bumps along the road by writing Dr. Greg Curnew at curnew@hhsc.ca.

Dr. Gregory Curnew is Associate Clinical Professor at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario; Staff Cardiologist/Internist and former Director of The Coronary Care Unit at the Hamilton General Division – Hamilton Health Sciences Corp and the founder of the "LIFE" Project (Lifestyle Intervention ForEver), a free community based group support program with meetings, health fairs and seminars to educate and inform adults on lifestyle changes and current health issues.

David Tsoulis is currently studying at McMaster University in his third year in the Bachelor of Health Sciences (honours) program.

¹ Dansinger M, Gleason J, Griffith J, Selker H, Schaefer E. Comparison of the Atkins, Ornish, Weight Watchers, and Zone Diets for Weight Loss and Heart Disease Risk Reduction. *JAMA*. 2005;293:43-53.

² Sofi F, Cesari F, Abbate R, Gensini G, Casini A. Adherence to Mediterranean diet and health status: meta-analysis. *BMJ*. 2008;337:a1344.

³ "Effects of a Mediterranean-Style Diet on Cardiovascular Risk Factors," *Annals of Internal Medicine*, July 4, 2006.

⁴ Psota T, Gebauer S, Kris-Etherton P. Dietary Omega-3 Fatty Acid Intake and Cardiovascular Risk. *The American Journal of Cardiology*. 2006;98(suppl):3i-18i.



Mediterranean Diet supplemented with walnuts helps to reduce metabolic syndrome

New results of the multicentre study, PREDIMED, demonstrate that the Mediterranean diet supplemented with nuts, including walnuts, reduces metabolic syndrome by 13.7 per cent and helps in its treatment and prevention. The study, coordinated by Dr. Jordi Salas, director of the Human Nutrition Unit of the Rovira i Virgili University (Tarragona), included 1,244 patients with cardiovascular risk factors. The findings were published in the Archives of Internal Medicine (December 8/22, 2008).

Participants were divided into three groups: one group received an extra 30 grams of nuts, primarily walnuts; another group consumed an additional one litre of virgin olive oil weekly and the third group followed a low-fat diet.

After one year, the prevalence of metabolic syndrome decreased by 13.7 per cent in the nut group, 6.7 per cent in the olive oil group and 2 per cent among those on the low-fat diet. High blood pressure was used as the outcome measurement. The study was funded by the Spanish Ministry of Health and the government of Valencia, Spain.



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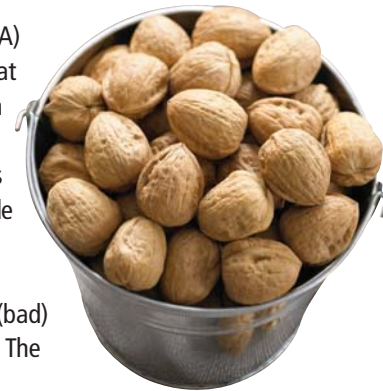
Walnuts and Fish Protect Against Heart Disease Differently

New research published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (April 1, 2009) comparing the effects of walnuts and fatty fish in the fight against heart disease demonstrated that both can reduce the overall risk of coronary heart disease. The research, conducted at Loma Linda University in California, found that in healthy individuals, walnuts lowered cholesterol more than fish, while fatty fish lowered triglycerides.

Researchers found that incorporating approximately 1.5 ounces of walnuts (42 grams, a handful of whole nuts or about three tablespoons of chopped nuts) into

the daily diet lowered serum total cholesterol by 5.4 per cent and LDL (bad) cholesterol by 9.3 per cent compared to a control diet (based on USDA recommendations).

Using American Heart Association (AHA) guidelines, the researchers also found that a diet including two servings of fatty fish per week (roughly four ounces each as recommended by the AHA for individuals without heart disease) decreased triglyceride levels by 11.4 per cent. Additionally, it increased HDL (good) cholesterol by four per cent, but also slightly increased LDL (bad) cholesterol compared to the control diet. The fish used in this study was salmon.



RECIPE FEATURE

California Walnut Stuffed Salmon

This entrée packs a “mega punch” with walnuts and salmon both being rich in omega-3 fatty acids. The addition of brown rice and spinach rounds out the nutritional balance and flavour.

MEASURES:	INGREDIENTS:	WEIGHTS:
2 tsp	olive oil	10 mL
1/4 cup	minced onion	50 mL
1	clove garlic, minced	1
4 cups	chopped spinach	1 L
1/2 tsp	each, salt and pepper	2 mL
1 cup	cooked brown rice	250 mL
2 tsp	lemon zest	10 mL
1/4 cup	shredded old Cheddar cheese	50 mL
1/2 cup	chopped California walnuts	125 mL
1 lb	salmon fillet, skinned and pin bones removed	454 g

Nutritional information per serving: Calories 378, Protein 24 g, Total fat 24 g (Polyunsaturated fats 11 g, Monounsaturated fats 7 g, Saturated fats 5 g), Cholesterol 57 mg, Carbohydrate 17 g, Fibre 4 g, Sodium 419 mg

For additional heart-healthy recipes, visit www.walnutinfo.com. Our selection of recipes can be printed in an easy-to-read, printable view format.

1 In large non-stick skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onions; cook until tender but not browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, spinach, salt and pepper and cook just until spinach starts to wilt, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat. **2** Add cooked rice to spinach and stir in lemon zest until well combined. **3** Spread spinach mixture evenly over salmon and sprinkle with cheese and walnuts. Roll up gently using toothpicks or butcher’s twine to secure. **4** Place salmon on a parchment lined rimmed baking sheet and bake in 375°F (190°C) oven until fish is cooked through, about 15 to 20 minutes. **5** Transfer to cutting board and let rest 10 minutes before slicing. Serve with steamed seasonal vegetables or green salad. **Makes 4 servings.**