A new study from Harvard School of Public Health provides evidence that peanuts and peanut butter are great food choices for reducing type 2 diabetes risk. Published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, this is the first long-term study to examine whether vegetable sources of protein, such as peanuts and peanut butter, impacts one’s risk of developing type 2 diabetes differently than animal sources of protein, such as red and processed meat. The results from this study show that when it comes to preventing diabetes, plant protein is the better option.

To determine the contribution of each protein source to diabetes risk, the researchers collected information about the types of protein participants were consuming. Researchers found that those who consumed the most animal protein increased their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 13%, while those who consumed the most plant protein reduced their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 9%. Overall, these results show that choosing plant sources of protein, such as peanuts and peanut butter, is a great way to meet your daily protein needs while protecting yourself against diabetes.

This association between protein source and diabetes risk was discovered after monitoring the food intake, medical history, and lifestyle behaviors of over 200,000 participants for 18-24 years. At regular intervals throughout the study, participants completed a survey called the Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ). By completing this commonly used research tool, participants were able to indicate how often, on average, they consumed certain foods and beverages. In this case, participants recorded how often they consumed 131 different food and beverage items, choosing from nine possible responses ranging from “never or less than once per month” to “six or more times per day.”

Peanut butter, peanuts, and whole grains were the most commonly consumed vegetable protein sources in this study, followed by mixed nuts, seeds, beans and peas, tofu, and leafy greens.

Interestingly, the data from this study also show that making small changes to your diet can have a big impact on your diabetes risk. Researchers found that substituting a single serving of vegetable protein for a serving of animal protein, refined grains, or potatoes, once per day, results in a 6-21% reduction in type 2 diabetes risk.

“This has important public health implications, since protein and carbohydrate are often exchanged for one another in the diet, and both type of protein and type of carbohydrate have been associated with type 2 diabetes risk.”

To reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, consider choosing a peanut butter sandwich on whole wheat bread over a ham or deli-meat sub at lunch, or an afternoon snack of trail mix made with peanuts and unsweetened dried fruit over potato chips or jerky.
If animal protein is a mainstay in your diet, you can still slash your diabetes risk without a complete diet overhaul. According to new research from Harvard School of Public Health, you can reduce your diabetes risk by making as little as one smart swap per day.

Researchers found that substituting a serving of plant protein for a serving of animal protein, refined grains or potatoes resulted in a 6-21% reduction in type 2 diabetes risk. When they looked specifically at two of the most commonly consumed plant protein sources—peanuts and peanut butter—they found the impact on diabetes risk to be just as powerful.

In this study, substituting peanuts or peanut butter for a serving of animal protein or low-quality carbohydrate resulted in a 7-21% reduction in type 2 diabetes. Try adding peanuts to your stir-fry instead of meat, or snack on peanuts instead of pretzels to reap this benefit.

**Peasnuts:**
**The Most Affordable Nut**

The peanut isn’t just the most nutritious nut—it’s also the MOST AFFORDABLE! An ounce of peanuts is ONE-THIRD of the price of an ounce of almonds, and nearly ONE-FOURTH of the price of an ounce of pistachios. With fiber, healthy fats, and more protein than any other nut (about 8 grams/serving), peanuts and peanut butter are an easy and affordable way to increase the healthfulness of your diet.

**Cost of Nuts (per 1 oz. serving):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nut</th>
<th>Cost (per 1 oz.)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PEANUT BUTTER</td>
<td>$0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEANUTS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Almonds</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walnuts</td>
<td>$0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pistashios</td>
<td>$0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peanuts are the most affordable nut. With protein, fiber, and healthy fats and oils, incorporating peanuts and peanut butter into your diet is a smart choice for your health and your wallet!
Peanuts have the lowest fresh water footprint of U.S. grown nuts. Data are expressed as gallons of water required to produce an ounce of nuts, shelled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Footprint</th>
<th>Gallons of Water Needed to Produce One Ounce</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PEANUT BUTTER</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pistashios</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walnuts</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almonds</td>
<td>80.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Peanuts are the most affordable nut. Packed with protein, fiber, and healthy fats and oils, peanuts and peanut butter are a smart choice for your health and your wallet!

Peanut: The Sustainable Nut

Peanuts are an environmentally friendly way to meet your body’s protein needs! According to a study commissioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), peanuts require LESS WATER to produce than almonds, walnuts, and pistachios.¹

The UNESCO study reported the water footprint, or the amount of freshwater required to produce a product, of agricultural commodities. Not only are peanuts a delicious source of healthy plant protein, peanuts also have the MOST EFFICIENT water use of U.S. grown nuts. Reduce your environmental impact and add a protein punch to your snacks and meals by choosing peanuts!

Check out this table to see how your favorite nut stacks up.

During digestion, the protein that you consume is broken down into small, individual units called amino acids. Your body uses these amino acids as the building blocks to build muscle, hormones, and enzymes. For optimal health, it is recommended that 10-35% of your daily calories come from protein.² This translates to at least 56 and 46 grams of protein per day for men and women, respectively.³

If you’re looking to increase the amount of protein in your diet without increasing your risk of type 2 diabetes, plant protein is the superior choice. In a recent study performed at Harvard School of Public Health, less than one-third of the total protein consumed is from plant sources, with the majority coming from animal sources.¹ However, as animal protein has been shown to increase diabetes risk, you may want to consider harnessing the diabetes-preventing power of plant protein.

You can keep hunger at bay and pack protein into your day with affordable and sustainable plant protein that you probably already have in your pantry: peanut butter. Try it in sauces, on fruits and vegetables, or as a dip.

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Tomatoes Stuffed with peanut quinoa

Try this Peanut Powered Recipe from The Peanut Institute. This protein-packed entrée is also terrific in a hollowed-out cucumber or zucchini, served on lettuce leaves, or on its own in a bowl.

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup tri-color quinoa, rinsed
8 medium tomatoes
1 tablespoon peanut oil
1 medium red onion, finely chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon chopped thyme
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 medium red bell pepper, diced
¾ cup corn kernels
1 ½ ounces lightly salted peanuts, coarsely chopped
¼ cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese
2 tablespoons orange juice
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Cook the quinoa according to package direction; transfer to a bowl and cool until ready to use.

Meanwhile, cut a thin slice off the tops of the tomatoes. Use a spoon to carefully scoop out the tomato pulp while leaving the shells intact. Discard the pulp and pat the inside of the tomatoes dry with paper towel.

Heat the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high. Add the onion, garlic, thyme and coriander; cook, stirring occasionally, until starting to soften, 1-2 minutes. Add the bell pepper and corn; cook until crisp-tender, 3-4 minutes. Add to the quinoa; stir in the peanuts, cheese, orange juice, salt and pepper.

Spoon the mixture evenly into each tomato shell. Enjoy!

References


The Peanut Institute is a non-profit organization that supports nutrition research and develops educational programs to encourage healthy lifestyles.