



For Immediate Release

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**American Heart Association Says Diets High in Good Fats -
Like Peanuts - May Protect Your Heart**

ALBANY, GA, Sept. 15 -- The American Heart Association (AHA) says that high monounsaturated fat diets can be an alternative to the presently recommended 30% fat diet to reduce the risk of heart disease, so long as the saturated fat intake (from animal products) is low and overall energy needs are balanced. This new Science Advisory was released this week in the current issue of *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*.

Dr. Penny Kris-Etherton, author of the research report and member of the AHA Nutrition Committee, said "studies tell us that the type of fat may be as important as how much is eaten."

Peanuts and peanut butter are noted as good sources of the monounsaturated fat that may protect the heart. The report says that when planning healthful diets, not all fats are created equal. Modest increases in food sources of monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) that replace food sources of saturated fatty acids (SFA) are required to achieve an optimal balance of fat in the diet. For example, peanut butter could replace butter or cream cheese on toast or a bagel, or a small handful of peanuts could replace popcorn or other high carbohydrate snacks.

Over the past several years as people tried to cut fat grams from their diets, they compensated by eating too many carbohydrates. While these lower fat-high carbohydrate diets reduced total and bad LDL cholesterol they also have the negative effects of lowering the good HDL cholesterol and raising triglycerides, additional risk factors for heart disease and diabetes. The high MUFA diets are preferable because they lower total and LDL cholesterol, lower triglycerides, and avoid reducing the good HDL cholesterol.

Evidence from epidemiological studies show that high MUFA Mediterranean-style diets can reduce the risk of heart disease. Other large population studies show people who consume small amounts of nuts and peanut butter five or more times a week can reduce their risk of heart disease by 50%.

In a clinical trial conducted at Penn State by Dr. Kris-Etherton, subjects who ate diets containing peanuts, peanut butter and peanut oil had significant decreases in their blood cholesterol levels within two weeks of eating the high MUFA diets. Also, the cholesterol lowering effects of the peanut diets were the same as the high olive oil diets.

"In addition to being good sources of monounsaturated fats, peanuts and peanut butter also contribute significant amounts of other heart-healthy nutrients to the diet such as vitamin E, folic

acid, soluble fiber, arginine, plant sterols, copper, zinc, selenium, and magnesium," said Patricia Kearney, M.Ed., R.D., nutritionist for The Peanut Institute.

The Peanut Institute is a non-profit organization that supports nutrition research and develops educational programs to encourage healthful lifestyles. Learn more about peanuts and health at www.peanut-institute.org

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