



For Immediate Release

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**MODERATE "GOOD" FAT DIETS WITH NUTS CAN HELP PROMOTE
HEALTHY CHOLESTEROL LEVELS**

June, 2001, Arlington, VA -- Major new guidelines from the National Cholesterol Education Program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) say that people needing to lower their blood cholesterol levels can include more fat in their diet, if it's the right kind of fat. The NIH diet guidelines now allows for up to 35 percent of daily calories from total fat, provided most of it is the good unsaturated fat, which doesn't raise cholesterol levels. Unsaturated fat is found in foods like peanuts, nuts, peanut butter, and olive oil.

The new guidelines call for more aggressive treatment of high cholesterol in people who are at risk for heart disease, beginning with "Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes," a combination of nutrition, physical activity and weight control. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) encourages Americans to lower daily intakes of saturated fat to less than 7 percent of calories and cholesterol to less than 200 mg.

A new review of nut research in the April *Nutrition Reviews*, by Penny Kris-Etherton, PhD, RD, of Penn State University, shows that peanuts, peanut butter and nuts are an excellent way to include monounsaturated fat in the diet. The article reviews some strong epidemiological data that shows an association between consuming nuts and protection against coronary heart disease (CHD). It also reviews a growing database of clinical studies indicate that part of the cardioprotective effect may be due to the fatty acid composition of nuts when they replace food sources of saturated fatty acids, as well as carbohydrates, in the diet. The study concludes, "It is clear that additional research is needed to further our understanding of how nuts confer [their] cardioprotective effect. In the meantime, it is appropriate to recommend inclusion of nuts in a healthy diet that meets energy needs to reduce the risk of CHD."

The structure and composition of peanuts and nuts is predominantly monounsaturated fatty acids, protein, fiber, and other bioactive constituents, which contribute to their function of lowering blood cholesterol levels. Nuts, like other foods with significant amounts of monounsaturated fat (MUFA) and polyunsaturated fat (PUFA), can help lower cholesterol when substituted for foods high in saturated fat and consumed as part of a calorie balanced diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol.

When it comes to health, small changes can offer big rewards. In addition to containing over 75% of the good unsaturated fat, peanuts contain bioactive components such as phytosterols; phytochemical compounds like flavonoids and phenolic compounds; and antioxidants, which nutrition scientists are only beginning to discover.

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 <http://www.peanut-institute.org>

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