



**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

**Pat Kearney**

**(703) 841-1600**

**pmk@pmkassociates.com**

**More Plant Protein, Healthy Fat,  
Like that in Peanuts and Peanut Butter is Better for Health**

*Alexandria, VA, March 10, 2009* – Researchers at Simmons College and The Harvard School of Public Health are the first to show that women who eat Mediterranean style diets with higher consumption of plant foods, which provide more plant proteins and healthy monounsaturated fat, like that in peanuts and peanut butter, have a lower risk of heart disease and stroke and are less likely to die from them. The study was released in a recent issue of the American Heart Association journal, *Circulation*.

Data was compiled from over 70,000 women who participated in the Nurses' Health Study where they were followed for 20 years. Researchers scored diets based on their resemblance to a Mediterranean style diet. A Mediterranean diet limits animal products and refined grains, while including many vegetables, whole grains, fish, moderate alcohol, and higher levels of healthy monounsaturated fat, which traditionally comes from olive oil. In the United States, Americans consume some olive oil, but get significant sources of monounsaturated fats from other plant foods, such as peanuts and peanut butter, which also provide plant protein.

Dr. Theresa Fung, Simmons College Nutrition Professor, who led the study said, "Women whose diets are the closest to the Mediterranean diet are less likely to have these diseases or to die from them." In fact, the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet and the Optimal Macronutrient Intake Trial for Heart Health (OmniHeart), which were both higher in plant foods, including peanuts and peanut butter, also showed significant health benefits. The DASH diet reduced blood pressure, and the OmniHeart Trial diet reduced blood pressure and CVD risk.

Previous research from The Harvard School of Public Health and Brigham and Woman's Hospital in Boston also supports eating peanuts and peanut butter as part of a Mediterranean style diet for weight loss. People stayed with a moderate fat Mediterranean style diet better than a low fat diet. They also maintained weight loss longer because they enjoyed eating foods like peanuts and peanut butter, which helped them feel more satisfied.

Peanuts and peanut butter are affordable American favorites. Two-thirds of the nuts consumed are peanuts, and peanut butter is the most popular plant food protein source. Population studies have shown that peanuts and peanut butter significantly contribute to the prevention of chronic disease. Eating about a handful of peanuts or a serving of peanut butter 5 times per week can cut heart disease risk by up to a half. Diabetes risk is also cut by almost a quarter with an ounce serving of peanuts per day or just a half serving (1 tbsp) of peanut butter.

Peanuts and peanut butter also improve nutrient quality in the diet. In addition to healthy fats and plant protein, they provide fiber and hard-to-get nutrients like magnesium, potassium, and vitamin E. Including these healthy plant foods can have huge overall health benefits whether it comes to weight loss and maintenance or to preventing chronic disease.

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](http://www.peanut-institute.org)

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