4 NUT DEBATES: SETTLED

When it comes to nuts, people have strong opinions.
Find out how these crunchy edibles fit into YOUR diet and health goals.
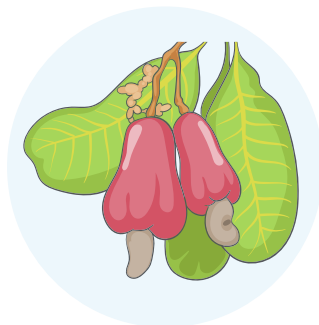
FIRST, KNOW YOUR NUTS

Botanically, many of the "nuts" we eat aren't actually nuts. But nutritionally speaking, most people (including researchers) group these foods together.

NUTS

Hazelnuts and chestnuts are "true" nuts—hard-shelled pods containing both the fruit and seed of the plant.

DRUPES

Almonds, cashews, pistachios, pecans, walnuts, macadamias, and Brazil nuts are the seeds of stone fruits (or "drupes").
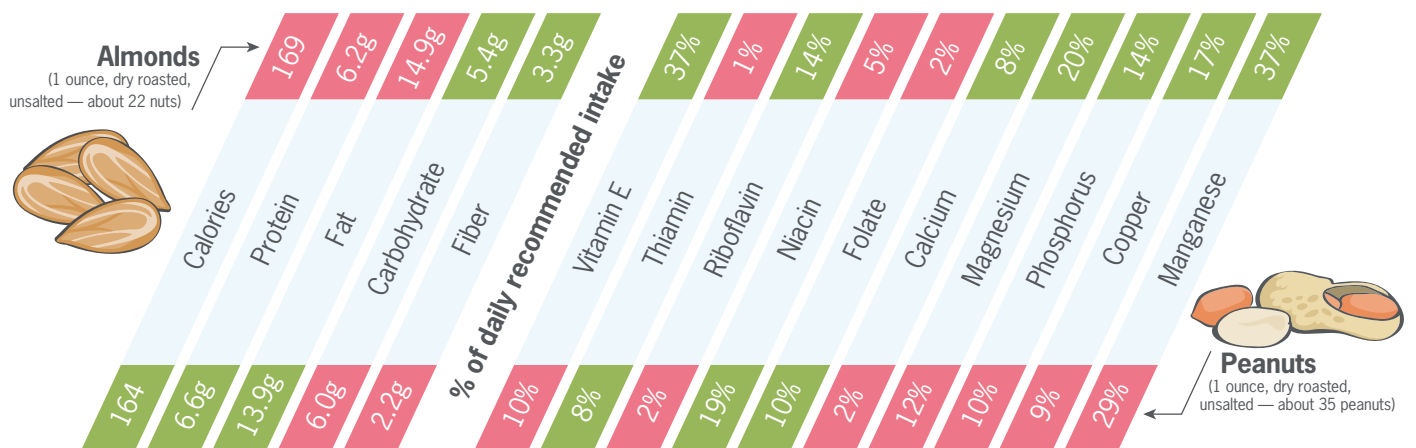
LEGUMES

Peanuts are actually a legume. The leafy part of the plant grows above ground but the seeds (or "nuts") grow underground.

COMMON NUT DEBATES, AND WHAT SCIENCE SAYS ABOUT THEM

1 "ALMONDS ARE HEALTHIER THAN PEANUTS"

One side claims that peanuts are the "junk food" of the nut kingdom. The other side: "Please. Almonds aren't worth the cost."

Almonds
(1 ounce, dry roasted, unsalted — about 22 nuts)

Peanuts
(1 ounce, dry roasted, unsalted — about 35 peanuts)

% of daily recommended intake

	Calories	Protein	Fat	Carbohydrate	Fiber	Vitamin E	Thiamin	Riboflavin	Niacin	Folate	Calcium	Magnesium	Phosphorus	Copper	Manganese
Almonds	169	6.2g	14.9g	5.4g	3.3g	37%	1%	14%	5%	2%	8%	20%	14%	17%	37%
Peanuts	164	6.6g	13.9g	6.0g	2.2g	10%	8%	2%	19%	10%	2%	12%	10%	9%	29%

ALMOND CONSUMPTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH...

- ✓ Higher intake of vitamins and minerals, lower BMI, and lower waist circumference
- ✓ Decreased cardiovascular disease risk and lower cholesterol
- ✓ Decreased inflammation and oxidative stress (due to high antioxidant content, mostly found in almond skin)
- ✓ Lower risk of cancer and all-cause mortality

Fun fact: You don't absorb 10-15% of calories in almonds. Some of its fat can't be broken down by our digestive enzymes.

PEANUT CONSUMPTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH...

- ✓ Significantly decreased risk of cardiovascular disease
- ✓ Improved memory function and stress response (potentially due to high polyphenol content)
- ✓ Significantly decreased risk of gallstones
- ✓ Healthy weight maintenance and reduced risk of obesity
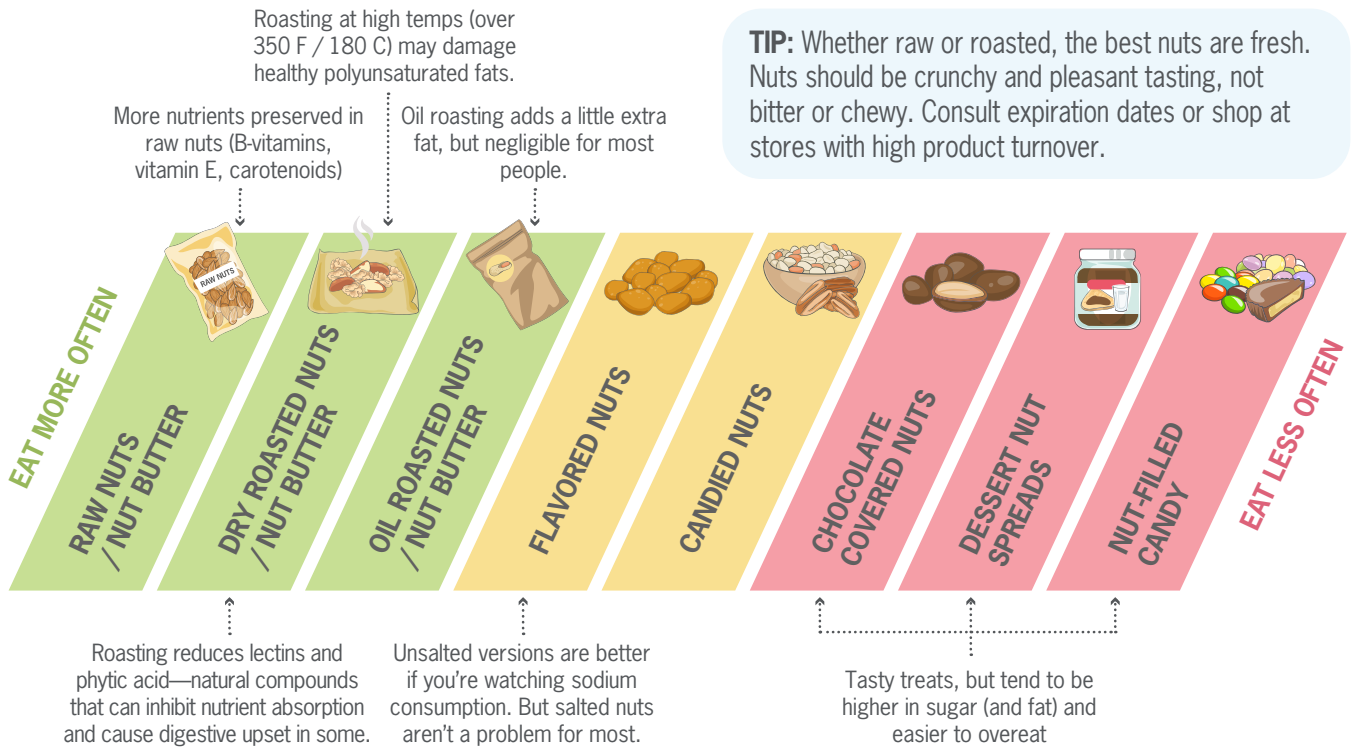- ✓ Lower risk of cancer and all-cause mortality

VERDICT: BOTH ALMONDS AND PEANUTS ARE NUTRITIONALLY BENEFICIAL. EAT THE ONE YOU LIKE BEST. (OR EAT BOTH.)

Note: All nutritional information pulled from https://nutritiondata.self.com/

"RAW NUTS ARE BETTER THAN ROASTED NUTS" (OR VICE VERSA)

Purists claim that raw nuts are the most nutritious, while others say, "Actually, a little roasting makes nuts MORE nutritious—and delicious."

Roasting at high temps (over 350 F / 180 C) may damage healthy polyunsaturated fats.

More nutrients preserved in raw nuts (B-vitamins, vitamin E, carotenoids)

Oil roasting adds a little extra fat, but negligible for most people.

TIP: Whether raw or roasted, the best nuts are fresh. Nuts should be crunchy and pleasant tasting, not bitter or chewy. Consult expiration dates or shop at stores with high product turnover.

EAT MORE OFTEN

- RAW NUTS / NUT BUTTER
- DRY ROASTED NUTS / NUT BUTTER
- OIL ROASTED NUTS / NUT BUTTER
- FLAVORED NUTS
- CANDIED NUTS
- CHOCOLATE COVERED NUTS
- DESSERT NUT SPREADS
- NUT-FILLED CANDY

EAT LESS OFTEN

Roasting reduces lectins and phytic acid—natural compounds that can inhibit nutrient absorption and cause digestive upset in some.

Unsalted versions are better if you're watching sodium consumption. But salted nuts aren't a problem for most.

Tasty treats, but tend to be higher in sugar (and fat) and easier to overeat

VERDICT: BOTH RAW AND ROASTED NUTS ARE GOOD OPTIONS. JUST BE CAUTIOUS OF CANDIED AND CHOCOLATE COVERED NUTS.
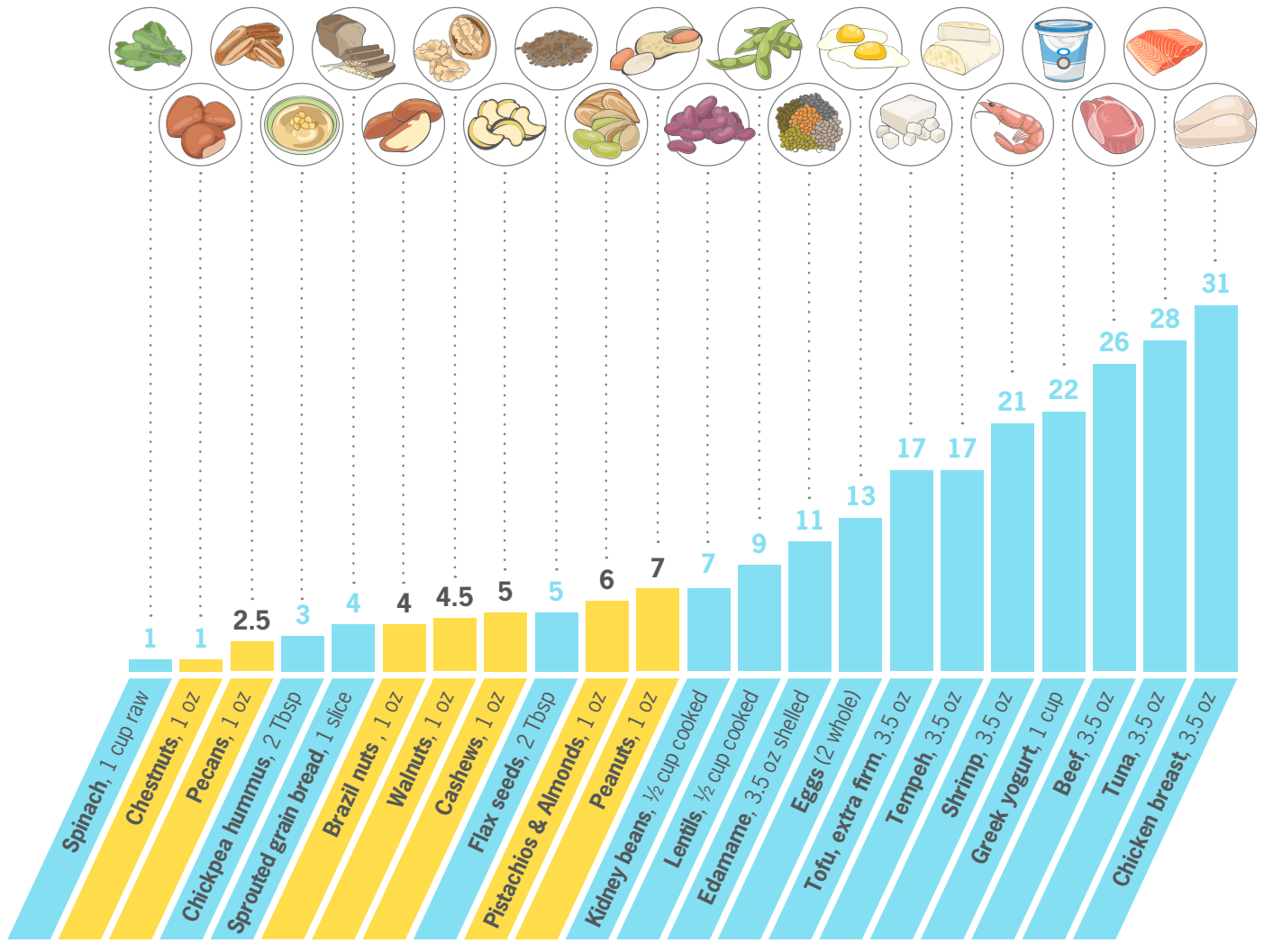
3 "NUTS ARE A GOOD SOURCE OF PROTEIN"

One team says, "Eat nuts for protein!" The other team: "Nuh-uh. You'd have to eat WAY too many calories get a decent amount of protein from nuts."

Cashews: 21% Carbs, 11% Protein, 68% Fat

Lean cooked chicken breast: 19% Fat, 81% Protein
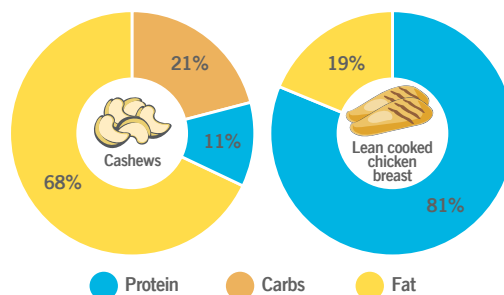
Protein · Carbs · Fat

Like most whole foods, nuts contain varying proportions of protein, carbohydrate, and fat. Generally though, nuts are considered a fat source.*

GRAMS OF PROTEIN PER SERVING IN PLANT AND ANIMAL SOURCES

Food	Protein (g)
Spinach, 1 cup raw	1
Chestnuts, 1 oz	1
Pecans, 1 oz	2.5
Chickpea hummus, 2 Tbsp	3
Sprouted grain bread, 1 slice	4
Brazil nuts, 1 oz	4
Walnuts, 1 oz	4.5
Cashews, 1 oz	5
Flax seeds, 2 Tbsp	5
Pistachios & Almonds, 1 oz	6
Peanuts, 1 oz	7
Kidney beans, ½ cup cooked	7
Lentils, ½ cup cooked	9
Edamame, 3.5 oz shelled	11
Eggs (2 whole)	13
Tofu, extra firm, 3.5 oz	17
Tempeh, 3.5 oz	17
Shrimp, 3.5 oz	21
Greek yogurt, 1 cup	22
Beef, 3.5 oz	26
Tuna, 3.5 oz	28
Chicken breast, 3.5 oz	31

VERDICT: WHILE NUTS CONTAIN PROTEIN, THEY'RE NOT PROTEIN-DENSE AND LACK IMPORTANT AMINO ACIDS. EAT A RANGE OF PROTEIN-RICH FOODS.

*For fully plant-based eaters, nuts are a good addition to meals: Although primarily a fat source, nuts can help boost overall protein intake.

4 "NUTS CAN HELP YOU LOSE WEIGHT"

One camp says nuts won't cause fat gain. The other argues that high-calorie nuts are an obstacle to fat loss.

NUTS SUPPORT FAT LOSS AND APPETITE REGULATION, IF THEY'RE EATEN IN MODERATION AND REPLACE LESS NUTRITIOUS FOODS

BUT...

VS   x10

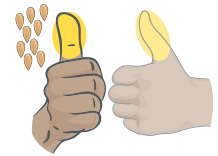Nuts are very calorie-dense compared to many other (perhaps equally satisfying) minimally processed foods

Especially if they're highly processed, nuts are easy to overdo.
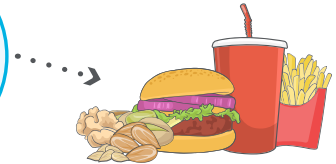
Adding nuts to a poor quality diet won't have any magical weight loss–or health–benefits.

IF YOU WANT TO ADD NUTS TO YOUR DIET, START WITH 1—2 THUMB-SIZED SERVINGS, EITHER WITH A MEAL OR AS A SNACK.

VERDICT: NUTS CAN AID WEIGHT LOSS, SO LONG AS YOU'RE MINDFUL OF PORTIONS—AND THE REST OF YOUR DIET.

SO, SHOULD YOU EAT NUTS?

EAT NUTS IF YOU...

- Like them and digest them well
- Want to include more healthy fats and/or whole foods in your diet
- Can afford them (some nuts are $$$)
- Want to add flavor and texture to your food

AVOID OR MINIMIZE NUTS IF YOU...

- Are allergic or they give you digestive problems
- Don't like them
- Can't access higher quality, minimally processed versions
- Feel out of control around them; they're "too good"

Pn