



# PECANS OFFER GOOD NUTRITION

Low-carbohydrate diets are all the craze. In fact, a recent study showed that approximately 42 million people are cutting their carbs, while around 17 to 20 million are following some type of formal low-carbohydrate diet.

Because pecans are a natural fit for a low-carb diet and to learn more about this recent trend, the National Pecan Shellers Association (NPSA) has posted a new poll on their web site, [www.ilovepecans.org](http://www.ilovepecans.org). The results among polltakers are as follows:

- ▶ Nearly 60% are either trying to watch their carb intake, still trying to figure out how to cut carbs and which ones to cut, or have been thinking about limiting their carb intake.
- ▶ 29% are confused about carbohydrates.
- ▶ And, another 27% say they are slowly figuring it (carbohydrates) out.

However, there was a lot less confusion when it came to the carb content of pecans-approximately 70% of those polled were aware, or became aware after taking the poll, that pecans are a low-carbohydrate, high-protein food. In fact, a handful of pecans (one ounce of pecans or 20 pecan halves) contains only 4 grams of carbohydrates.

Pecans belong to the protein group in the USDA's Food Guide Pyramid, along with meat, poultry, fish, eggs and dried beans - a group of foods that are naturally low in carbohydrates. Pecans are also heart healthy - almost 90 percent of the fats (oils) in pecans are unsaturated. In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved the following qualified health claim, "Scientific evidence suggests but does not prove that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts (including pecans), as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease."

Although pecans are an ideal food for low-carb dieters and for those trying to watch their weight, according to an earlier consumer survey conducted by NPSA, many consumers are still not incorporating pecans into their daily diet. Although pecans are popular as part of snack mixes and baked goods (56% and 85% of pecan consumers, respectively, said they use pecans in this way), not as many use pecans in ways that can add more nutritional value to meals. Only one-third of respondents (31%) use pecans as an ingredient in main dishes, and only one-fourth (23%) use them in salads. [\[top\]](#)

However, pecans provide a lot of nutritional bang for your buck. Pecans contain over 19 vitamins and minerals - including vitamin A, vitamin E, folic acid, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, several B vitamins, and zinc. And, one ounce of pecans provides 10 percent of the recommended daily value for fiber. Fiber keeps you fuller longer and will keep your blood sugar steady, an important element to low-carb eating.



"Pecans can easily be incorporated into almost anyone's diet - even those watching their weight and controlling their carbohydrate intake," noted Beth Hubrich, RD with NPSA. "And, because pecans contain mainly good fats in addition to the other vitamins and minerals, pecans also provide other health benefits," Hubrich added.

Whether for a snack or a meal, pecans provide many nutritional benefits that can nicely complement a carb-controlled diet. Here are 5 easy ways to add more nutrient-dense pecans in your diet:

- Sprinkle on your favorite salad for added crunch.
- Instead of frying, use ground pecans as a coating for fish, chicken or pork.
- Combine ground pecans with parsley and green onions, thicken with olive oil and spread on salmon fillets before grilling.
- Toast pecans for a refreshing snack. For a twist, sprinkle with red pepper for a "hot" version of this snack.
- In place of meat (such as chicken or pork) in various casserole dishes, use pecans. Nuts offer many of the same nutrients as meat but are another alternative for those striving for a more plant-based diet.
- When you think pecans, think "substitution." In place of cheese on your salad, sprinkle pecans or instead of frying use pecans as a coating. In place of the meat in a casserole or main entrée, try pecans! [\[top\]](#)