

For Immediate Release

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Hazelnut-Enriched Diet Reduces Risk of Coronary Heart Disease

New study shows MUFA-rich hazelnuts can trim risk

Seattle, WASH - A new study, published in the September issue of the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, found a single serving a day of hazelnuts favorably alters multiple plasma lipid variables and reduces risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). Results show the monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs) in hazelnuts significantly increased HDL “good” cholesterol concentration while reducing triacylglycerol (TAG) concentrations.

This study is one of the first to break ground on how MUFA-rich hazelnuts affect the plasma lipid response to a cholesterol-lowering diet. This data will enhance our knowledge and appreciation for the use of hazelnuts in a variety of food and specialty products.

“Recent media attention about nut’s health properties is driving consumers to find more ways to add nuts back into their diets,” said Lisa Kelly RD, MPH. “Hazelnuts can give food products a strong nutritional boost while adding the indulgence and satisfaction that consumers crave.”

Current National Cholesterol Education Program and American Heart Association diets are designed to lower total and LDL cholesterol concentrations. However, these diets also tend to decrease beneficial HDL cholesterol and increase triacylglycerol (TAG) concentration. These changes may inadvertently increase coronary risk factors. Therefore, it is imperative to identify alternative diets such as a hazelnut-enriched diet, that effectively modify the plasma lipid profiles, thus reduce CHD risk.

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This study, conducted at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey, investigated the effects of a hazelnut-enriched diet on plasma cholesterol and lipoprotein profiles in hypercholesterolemic adult men compared with baseline and control diet.

The consumption of 40 grams per day (approximately 1 1/3 ounces) of hazelnuts resulted in a significant increase in MUFA intake. Results of other tree nut studies are comparable, however, the amount of hazelnuts added to the diet is less than half reported for other nuts. Both dietary cholesterol concentrations and body weights of subjects remained stable throughout the study.

Fifteen hypercholesterolemic men aged 48 ± 8 years were recruited. A well-controlled, 2-period (P_1 and P_2) study design with a total of 8-week was implemented. In the P_1 , subjects consumed a control diet (low-fat, low-cholesterol and high-carbohydrate). During the P_2 , the control diet was supplemented with MUFA-rich hazelnut (40 g/day), which provided 11.6 percent of total energy content. All parameters and measurements were obtained at baseline and end of each four-week diet period.

The Mediterranean diet, high in MUFAs, has long won the claim of decreasing the risk of heart disease and recently been shown to reduce the risk for Alzheimer's disease. The diet has taught us that the amount and type of fat consumed deserves attention. Hazelnuts, included in the Mediterranean diet, have one of the lowest percentages of saturated fat and are a rich source of antioxidants, dietary fiber and phytochemicals. Moreover, hazelnuts are an excellent source of vitamin E, which has also been shown to reduce the risk of CHD.

The Hazelnut Council was formed in 1996 with the end goal of increasing the awareness, distribution and consumption of hazelnuts in the United States. The hazelnut industries of Turkey and Oregon and the Association of Food Industries, which imports Turkish hazelnuts, comprise its membership. For more information, please visit www.hazelnutcouncil.org.