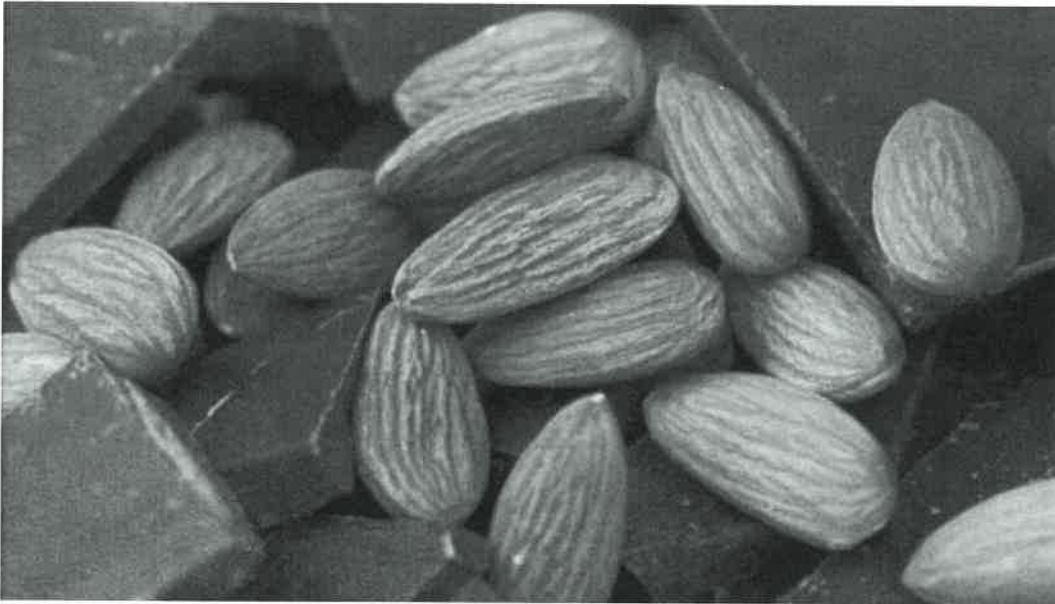


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# Eating almonds and dark chocolate lowers bad cholesterol

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS



Eating nearly one-third a cup of almonds a day — either alone or combined with almost one-quarter cup of dark chocolate and  $2\frac{1}{3}$  tablespoons of cocoa a day — may reduce a risk factor for coronary heart disease, according to a recent study.

The study, published in the **Journal of the American Heart Association**, found that combining raw almonds, dark chocolate and cocoa significantly reduced the number of low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, particles in the blood of overweight and obese people. LDL is often called “bad cholesterol” because of the role it plays in clogging arteries.

As was the case in past studies, the key lies in how much you eat, said the study’s lead author Penny Kris- Etherton, Ph.D., a Penn State University distinguished professor of nutrition.

“It’s important to put this into context: The message is not that people should go out and eat a lot of chocolate and almonds to lower their LDL,” she said. “People are allowed to have about 270 discretionary calories a day, and when foods like almonds, dark chocolate and cocoa are consumed together as a discretionary food, they confer health benefits unlike other discretionary foods such as frosted donuts.”

Past studies have shown health benefits from eating moderate amounts of almonds, dark chocolate and unsweetened cocoa. The new study sought to see whether combining those three foods had a positive effect on the heart health of overweight and obese individuals.

Researchers studied 31 participants ages 30 to 70. For one month, participants didn’t eat any of the foods in the study. In the next one-month period, participants ate 42.5 grams of almonds a day; in the third month, they ate 43 grams of dark chocolate combined with 18 grams of cocoa powder; in the fourth month, they ate all three foods.