



JPNN|Washington|Snacking on almonds instead of carbs could reduce belly fat and lower the risk of heart disease, a new study has claimed. The study found that a daily snack of 1.5 ounces of almonds instead of a high-carbohydrate muffin, eaten as part of an overall healthy diet, improved a number of heart disease risk factors in study participants. In addition to significantly improving LDL and total cholesterol, snacking on almonds instead of muffins also reduced central adiposity (belly fat), a well-established heart disease risk factor. Reducing abdominal fat is particularly beneficial given its connection to metabolic syndrome and increased risk for heart disease. The twelve-week, randomised, controlled clinical study, led by researchers at Penn State University, was conducted in 52 overweight, middle-aged adults who had high total and LDL cholesterol but were otherwise healthy. Participants ate cholesterol-lowering diets that were identical except that one group was given a daily snack of 1.5 ounces (42g) of whole natural almonds, while the other group was given a banana muffin that provided the same number of calories. Participants were provided all meals and snacks in amounts based on their calorie needs to maintain body weight, and followed each diet for six weeks.

The diet containing the almond snack, compared to the muffin snack, decreased total cholesterol, LDL-cholesterol non-HDL-cholesterol and remnant lipoproteins. In addition, the diet with the muffin snack reduced HDL (good) cholesterol more than the almond diet. Despite no differences in body weight or total fat mass, the almond diet significantly reduced abdominal fat mass, waist circumference and leg fat mass compared to the diet with the muffin snack. “Our research found that substituting almonds for a high-carbohydrate snack improved numerous heart health risk factors, including the new finding that eating almonds reduced belly fat,” said Claire Berryman, lead researcher of the study. “Choosing almonds as a snack may be a simple way to help fight the onset of metabolic and cardiovascular diseases,” said Berryman. The study joins nearly two decades of research showing that almonds can help maintain a healthy heart and healthy cholesterol levels, and provides new evidence showing that regularly eating almonds instead of a high-carbohydrate snack may have benefits on body composition. The study was published in the Journal of the American Heart Association. PTI