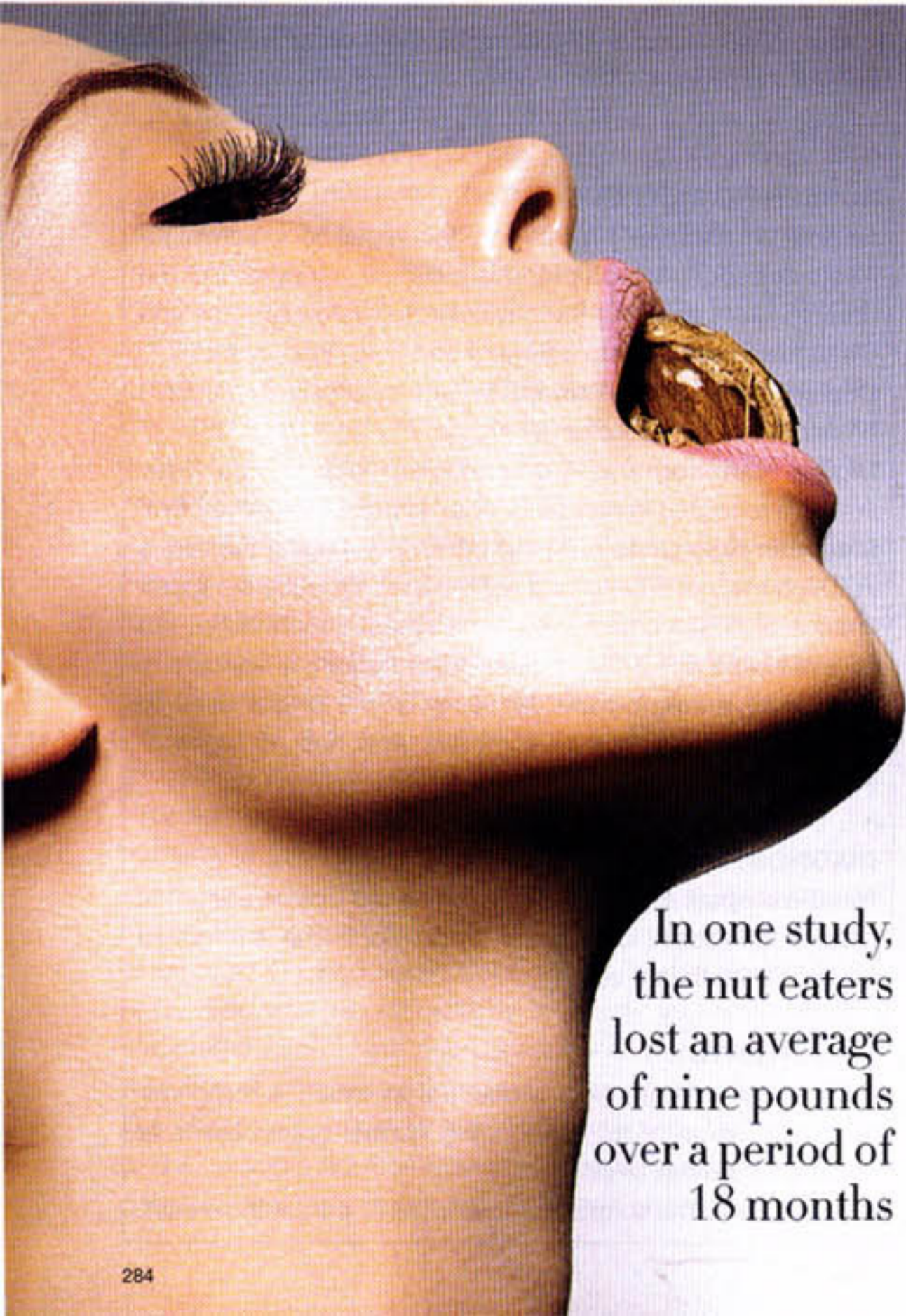


Diet News



Nuts: The Stay-Slim Secret

Though notoriously high in fat and calories, new evidence reveals that nuts might actually help you *lose* pounds, stay healthy and get perfect skin. This is why weight-conscious women—including supermodels—consider nuts to be the diet staple du jour



In one study, the nut eaters lost an average of nine pounds over a period of 18 months

How do nuts contribute to weight loss?

"The essential fats found in nuts help keep your blood sugar stable for a few hours after they are consumed, which, in turn, promotes weight loss," explains Esther Blum, R.D., a registered dietician in New York City. "Basically, when your blood sugar level is balanced, your body can burn calories from its own fat stores, whereas when your blood sugar level is imbalanced, you crave carbohydrates and sugar." Blum says the magnesium and zinc found in nuts also help fight sugar cravings. Studies support this. An 18-month study conducted at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston compared subjects who followed a low-fat diet (20 percent of calories from fat) with those who followed a moderate-fat diet (35 percent fat, mostly from tree nuts, peanuts and olive oil) and found that while the low-fat dieters gained on average more than six pounds, the nut eaters lost an average of nine pounds. Experts believe this effect occurred because the nut eaters felt more satiated and thus ate less overall.

If I'm dieting, what nuts should I eat?

Your best bet is probably the almond, says Gene Spiller, Ph.D., author of *Healthy Nuts* and founder of the Sphera Foundation in Los Altos, California. It's packed with protein and contains a moderate amount of calories and fat (an ounce—approximately 24 nuts—has 6 grams of protein, 160 calories and 14 fat grams). A great alternative is the hazelnut. An ounce (about 20 nuts) has 4 grams of protein, 180 calories and 17 fat grams.

What nuts should I avoid?

Macadamias. An ounce (10 to 12 nuts) has 2 grams of protein, 200 calories and 22 fat grams—one of the highest fat contents.

How many nuts should I eat to slim down?

Spiller recommends a handful four to five days per week. He emphasizes, however, that the calories you consume from nuts must replace other calories in your typical eating plan. In other words, eat nuts instead of—not in addition to—other less healthy fat sources, like butter and fatty meats and cheeses. For a list of the most popular nuts' nutritional contents, go to nuthealth.org.

What benefits do nuts offer in addition to weight loss?

- **Maintenance of normal bodily functions.** "Zinc promotes the production of white blood cells and appears to block rhinoviruses, and magnesium helps lower your blood pressure and reduce the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome," Blum says. Nuts also contain potassium, which aids in muscle development.
- **Improved resistance to diseases.** Nuts are high in mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids, the "good fats" that help prevent heart disease. In addition, nuts contain many antioxidants that help protect against certain cancers.
- **A lower cholesterol level.** A study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* concluded that eating nuts like almonds can significantly decrease your LDL ("bad") cholesterol level due to their large quantity of monounsaturated fat.

What nuts are especially healthy?

Walnuts. They are the only nuts that contain a significant amount of omega-3 fatty acids that are necessary for optimal health.

Is it true that nuts are bad for my skin?

No, says Blum. In fact, the omega-3 fatty acids in walnuts moisturize the skin, giving it a healthy glow. And zinc, found in all nuts, can help ward off acne. **Allison Fabian**

Additional research by Jennifer Bett Meyer