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New studies link almond consumption with prediabetes in Indians

Eating almonds before meals improved blood sugar levels in some people with prediabetes

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Two new research studies with almonds, one conducted over three days and the other over three months, demonstrated benefits to blood sugar control for Asian Indians with prediabetes and overweight/obesity – and the three-month almond intervention broke new ground, reversing prediabetes, or glucose intolerance, to normal blood sugar levels in nearly one quarter (23.3%) of the people studied.

In both studies, 60 people ate 20 g (0.7 oz) of almonds, around a small handful, 30 minutes before breakfast, lunch, and dinner throughout the study durations. Researchers expressed their enthusiasm for these almond studies and the first-of-its-kind statistically significant reduction in measures of prediabetes by calling the reversal of prediabetes through diet “the holy grail of medicine.” Better glucose control over time through dietary strategies like including almonds could help stave off diabetes progression. Nearly 70% of individuals with prediabetes will develop diabetes within their lifetime.

Both studies were randomised controlled trials funded by the Almond Board of California. The researchers hypothesised that the almond snack before major meals, known as “preloading,” would reduce glucose and insulin fluctuations after meals and reduce overall hyperglycemia compared to the control diet. The findings complement the breadth of research on different populations on how almonds support healthy blood sugar as part of a balanced diet.

While the results are extremely promising, the researchers noted some limitations, including the relatively small sample size and limited period of intervention. They also noted that the study included Asian Indians who had well-controlled prediabetes, and the researchers cannot extrapolate the same impact of a premeal load of almonds in participants with type 2 diabetes. Including participants with poorly controlled metabolic states as well as those with diabetes could be useful.

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