Overweight and obese Latino adolescents who ate a daily snack of peanuts or peanut butter for 6 months improved their body weight status, according to a study from Baylor College of Medicine. Published in the Journal of Applied Research on Children, this study is one of the first to show an improvement in weight status of Mexican Americans, one of the minority groups at highest risk for obesity, following an intensive, school-based intervention program.

In this study, investigators at Baylor College of Medicine determined whether peanuts and peanut butter could improve the weight status of overweight and obese Mexican American adolescents from urban, low-income families. The researchers found that when these children ate a peanut or peanut butter snack at least four times per week, they significantly reduced their Body Mass Index (BMI), a standardized measure of weight status based on an individual’s height and weight.

These findings come from a sub-study of the Family Lifestyle Overweight (FLOW) Prevention Program, which was a school-based program that included nutrition and physical activity education along with a snacking intervention. Study participants were provided with a daily afternoon snack of peanuts or peanut butter, to provide a hefty dose of nutrients while promoting satiety. Researchers assessed the children’s height and weight before and after the intervention, as well as how often the children ate the peanut and peanut butter snacks that were provided.

The researchers found that over the course of the study, children who consumed peanuts or peanut butter more than four times per week reduced their BMI more than children who consumed peanuts less than once per week.

These results indicate that peanuts are an effective way to combat childhood obesity, which affects 17% of children in the United States. Since overweight children are more likely to be overweight and develop life-threatening, chronic diseases as adults, these findings that peanuts may help children achieve a healthy weight are significant.

Packed with protein, fiber, healthy fats and essential nutrients, peanuts are a healthy, affordable, and great tasting snack for all ages.

Children who ate peanuts or peanut butter more than four times per week reduced their BMI more than those who ate peanuts less than once per week. Peanuts are a great-tasting and portable way to control hunger, and your weight!
Snacks make up a significant portion of children’s daily energy intake. Ninety-six percent of children aged 2-19 years consume at least one snack daily, and over half of children consume three or more snacks per day. On average, snacks account for 26% of daily energy consumption.

Because they constitute such a large percentage of daily energy intake, snacks are an excellent way to consume essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats. Snacks that are high in protein induce satiety, or the feeling of fullness, and can help you to eat less throughout the day. Making smart snack choices can also stave off childhood overweight and obesity.

Peanuts are an excellent example of a smart snack. A study published in the journal Nutrition Research showed that children who ate peanuts or peanut butter at least once per week were less likely to be overweight, had higher vitamin and mineral intakes, and had lower blood cholesterol levels than children who did not eat peanuts. Try swapping heart-healthy, hunger-busting peanuts and peanut butter for your typical afternoon snack, and feel the difference!

Peanuts are a “Smart Snack” for Preventing Obesity

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act required the USDA to issue new “Smart Snacks in School” nutrition standards. The standards apply to all snacks sold during the school day in cafeterias, vending machines, school stores and snack carts. Peanuts are one of the smartest snacks in the “Smart Snacks in School” guide, with a one-ounce serving having zero empty calories.

“The relatively high fat and protein content of peanuts helps to promote satiety while providing a healthy snack option for weight management.”1

Visit www.fns.usda.gov to learn more about the “Smart Snacks in Schools” nutrition standards.

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PEANUT BUTTER increases VEGETABLE INTAKE IN CHILDREN

It is known that eating vegetables promotes a healthy weight, and protects against cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancer. However, most children do not consume the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. According to a study published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, peanut butter is an excellent way to increase the amount and types of vegetables that children eat.

In this study, two classrooms of 6th grade children were offered bags of carrots, celery, and broccoli, and encouraged to eat as many vegetables as they wanted. Children in one of the classrooms were given peanut butter to accompany their vegetables, while children in the other classroom were not given any accompaniments. Vegetables were offered during class once a week, for four months.

After four months, researchers measured the amount of vegetables the children were consuming. They found that children who had been served peanut butter with their vegetables increased their vegetable intake by 31%. Conversely, children who were served vegetables only decreased their intake by 21%. Similar patterns were observed in children who reported being resistant to eat or try vegetables.

Peanuts are what researchers call a “preferred flavor” which means that people naturally like it—including children who are picky eaters. Even adults like the flavor of peanuts; researchers at Purdue University found that consuming peanuts every day for 12 weeks did not diminish likeability in adult study participants.

Are you getting the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables each day? If not, reach for that jar of peanut butter in your pantry. It may just be the kick you need to eat those fruits and vegetables.

“This study is significant because it offers a simple and cost-effective strategy to increase vegetable intake in children.”

Try the “Go with FLOW” Challenge!

Does your stomach do the 2:30pm grumble everyday? Try the “Go with FLOW” Challenge! Each day for two weeks, stock your bag with peanuts and peanut butter for a healthy afternoon snack. The plant protein, fiber, healthy fats, and nutrients in peanuts will give you energy, help you snack less, stay leaner, and eat more fruits and vegetables. Try it for two weeks and feel the difference!
**Peanut Caramel popcorn**

With peanut butter, agave, and honey, this is a sweet and savory snack that you can feel good about.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1/4 cup popcorn kernels
- 1/3 cup wildflower honey
- 1/3 cup agave syrup
- 1/2 cup peanut butter, smooth
- 1/2 cup peanuts, toasted, chopped
- 1 tsp sea salt, fine

**DIRECTIONS**

Heat a heavy bottomed pot with the peanut oil. Add the popcorn kernels and the salt and toss in the oil. Cover partially.

When the popcorn starts popping, cover completely and shake the pan until popcorn slows down popping. Take the pan off the heat.

Heat the honey and the agave syrup in a pan and cook for 5 minutes. Add the peanut butter and whisk very well until combined.

Place the popcorn into a bowl and drizzle the peanut caramel over it. Toss well and sprinkle with the chopped peanuts.

Find this and other great-tasting, snack-worthy recipes at www.peanutpower.org.

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**References**


