Rates of obesity and diabetes are rising rapidly in the U.S. In 2008, 34% of U.S. adults were overweight and 34% were obese, totaling 68% of the U.S. adult population who were either overweight or obese. In 2010, 27% of U.S. adults age 65 or older had diabetes. In 2005-2008, 35% of U.S. adults had prediabetes, which is a state of elevated blood glucose that does not yet meet diabetic levels. People with prediabetes are much more likely to develop true diabetes.

In people with diabetes, a hormone called insulin becomes unable to perform its normal function of prompting cells to take in sugar, or glucose, from the blood. These cells are said to become insulin resistant. As a result, sugar from food builds up to unhealthy levels in the blood, and the cells do not get the energy they need from glucose. The more fatty tissue a person has, the more resistant their cells become to insulin.

So what’s the good news? Diabetes and prediabetes can be controlled by medication, healthy eating, and physical activity. Losing weight can also help. Lifestyle factors like these can also help prevent Type 2 diabetes from developing in people who are at risk because they are overweight and/or have prediabetes.

Even better news? If you have diabetes or are at increased risk for diabetes, you don’t have to cut peanuts from your diet. In fact, scientists are discovering that eating a daily serving of peanuts can actually counteract diabetes risk factors and aid in weight loss!
Eating peanuts DOES NOT cause weight gain

The evidence is consistent: people who eat more peanuts do not weigh more. Several large cohort studies, following tens of thousands of people for many years, have found similar results. A 2009 study of 51,000 healthy women, ages 20-45, found no significant differences in weight over eight years between those who ate peanuts more than twice a week and those who rarely ate peanuts. This was true whether women were normal-weight, overweight, or obese. In fact, there was a slight trend for less weight gain in women who frequently ate peanuts. Greater peanut consumption was associated with lower risk for obesity. This result reflected similar findings from two earlier studies of 31,000 men and women followed for six years and 86,000 females followed eight years, which also found that frequent nut and peanut eaters were less obese.  

Another study of about 15,000 adults and children found that men, women and children who ate peanuts had lower BMIs than those who did not eat peanuts. These results emerged despite the fact that the peanut-eaters were consuming more calories from fat. BMI also did not differ between adults or children who ate small versus large quantities of peanuts or peanut butter.

ADULTS & CHILDREN WHO EAT PEANUTS HAVE A LOWER BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

Adapted from Griel et al, 2004

*significant difference

PEANUTS CAN HELP in weight loss

Peanuts can help you lose weight! In one study, 25 women with high cholesterol were placed on either a low fat diet or a low fat, high monounsaturated fat diet, where the monounsaturated fat came from peanuts. These diets were designed to help them maintain their weight. Despite this setup, the peanut-supplemented group still lost weight, while the other group did not.

In another study designed to compare weight loss diets, 101 overweight men and women were assigned to either low fat or moderate fat diets. The diets were kept equal in calories, but the moderate fat group ate more fat in the form of monounsaturated fat from peanut butter, peanuts and other nuts. At 6 months, both groups had lost the same amount of weight, but at 18 months, the moderate fat group had maintained its weight loss, while the low fat group had gained back all the lost weight. A similar study also showed slightly more weight loss in the moderate fat group, where half the fat came from peanuts and peanut butter. In a study of 60 overweight children, an instructor-led weight management program that included peanuts and peanut butter snacks was superior in weight loss and maintenance to a self-help weight loss program.
Given the link between obesity and diabetes and peanuts’ weight-benefitting effects, it may not be so surprising that peanut consumption can lower diabetes risk.

A 2011 Harvard study of about 200,000 adults followed for up to two decades found that red meat consumption increased the risk for Type 2 diabetes. The researchers determined that substituting a serving of nuts including peanuts for a serving of red meat daily decreased Type 2 diabetes risk by 21%. An earlier study of 84,000 women followed for 16 years found that nut and peanut consumption anywhere from once a week to more than five times a week lowered the risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. Eating peanut butter also lowered the risk.

Frequent PEANUT BUTTER consumption LOWERS Type 2 Diabetes risk

A major study done by the Harvard School of Public Health showed that there was a linear relationship between how often people ate peanuts, nuts, and peanut butter and the reduction of risk of Type 2 Diabetes. People who ate an ounce of nuts (serving) or one Tablespoon of peanut butter (half serving) five or more times a week had the greatest risk reduction.

Adapted from Jiang et al., Nut and Peanut Butter Consumption and Risk of Type 2 Diabetes in Women, JAMA, 2002
Method:
Preheat oven to 350°.
In a large bowl, combine oats and peanuts. Add honey and mix to combine. Add melted peanut butter and mix until moistened. Fold chocolate chips into the dough. If dough is too dry, add more peanut butter or honey 1 tablespoon at a time until moistened.
Press dough in a greased (non-stick spray) 9 x 13 baking dish. Bake for 25 minutes.

Ingredients:
- 4 cups rolled oats
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup unsalted peanuts, chopped
- 3/4 cup peanut butter, melted
- 1/2 cup honey

5 Ingredient Peanut Butter Granola Bars
Makes 12-16 granola squares

References

Go to www.peanut-institute.com for:
• Nutrition research on peanuts, peanut butter, and peanut oil
• Recipes
• Meal plans
• Educational materials

The Peanut Institute is a non-profit organization that supports nutrition research and develops educational programs to encourage healthy lifestyles.

For Further Information:
The Peanut Institute
P.O. Box 70157
Albany, GA 31708-0157
USA

TEL: 1-888-8PEANUT FAX: 1-229-888-5150
www.peanut-institute.com

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www.peanut-institute.com

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