

HEART HEALTHY FOODS

Almonds: Grab A Handful For Your Heart

(NAPSA)—Just about everyone's nuts about almonds.

First, the Food & Drug Administration recently announced a health claim for almonds and several other nuts, saying: "Scientific evidence suggests but does not prove that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts, including almonds, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease."

One and a half ounces equals 1/3 cup, or about 34 almonds.

Then, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* published a study about almonds' significant role in a cholesterol-lowering eating plan that works as well as a starting dose of cholesterol-lowering drugs.

This "Portfolio" eating plan was created by the University of Toronto. Patients in the "Portfolio" eating plan study ate a menu of foods low in saturated fat and high in plant sterols, such as almonds, soy burgers, oat bran, beans and other heart-healthy foods. Comparison groups either ate a low-fat diet, or combined a low-fat diet with lovastatin, a cholesterol-lowering drug. In four weeks, both the people taking the lovastatin and the people eating almonds and foods high in plant sterols lowered their cholesterol by approximately 30 percent.

Scientists have known about almonds' heart-healthy benefits for many years, but this recent news is just one more reason to "grab a handful for the heart," according to Carolyn O'Neil, M.S., R.D.

"Almonds are a perfect snack—they're tasty and crunchy," she said. "And there's all the research



on their ability to lower cholesterol because they contain heart-healthy unsaturated fats. Plus, ounce for ounce, almonds are the most nutrition-packed nut."

A 1.5-ounce handful of almonds is a leading source of vitamin E and magnesium and offers protein, fiber, potassium, calcium, phosphorus and iron in 246 calories. O'Neil suggested eating them as a snack, in place of less nutritious foods such as popcorn, pretzels and potato chips.

Some of her other favorite ways to eat almonds:

- Eat a handful of whole, natural almonds as a snack with a piece of fruit.
- Sprinkle a few sliced almonds in granola, cold cereal and hot cereal.
- Sprinkle some slivered almonds in a salad.
- Include chopped almonds in a stir-fry—roast a few in a dry pan or wok, and then set them aside before cooking the other ingredients. Sprinkle them on at the end so they stay crunchy.

For more information about heart-healthy almonds, including recipes, visit www.PortfolioEatingPlan.com or www.AlmondsAreIn.com.