

## **Almonds may Lower Heart Disease Risk**

*Source: Institute of Food Technologists*

A study published in *Free Radical Research* shows that adding almonds to the diet may reduce heart disease risk in men by lowering blood pressure and improving blood flow.

Healthy middle-aged men (mean age 56), healthy young men (mean age 22), and young men with two or more cardiovascular (CV) risk factors (mean age 27) consumed 50 g of almonds/day for four weeks. A control group maintained habitual diets over the same period. Plasma levels of alpha-tocopherol, blood pressure, total HDL- and LDL-cholesterol, and triglycerides were measured at baseline and at the study's end. Alpha-tocopherol is an antioxidant that occurs naturally in nuts, seeds, certain vegetables, and grains.

Although alpha-tocopherol levels were similar among all groups at baseline, they were markedly higher in the men who ate almonds at the end of four weeks. In addition, their blood flow-mediated dilatation improved and diastolic blood pressure were reduced significantly. Systolic blood pressure declined only among healthy young men who ate almonds. At the end of the study, HDL- and LDL-cholesterol and triglyceride levels were significantly higher in the middle-aged group and the CV group, but the changes weren't affected by almond consumption.

The researchers concluded that "a short-term almond-enriched diet can increase plasma alpha-tocopherol and improve vascular function in asymptomatic healthy men aged between 20 and 70 years without any effect on plasma lipids or markers of oxidative stress."