

Snacking on Raisins Helps Lower Blood Pressure

Source: Food Product Design

Eating a handful of raisins three times a day may significantly lower blood pressure, compared to eating other common snacks, according to new research presented at the American College of Cardiology's 61st Annual Scientific Session.

"It is often stated as a known fact that raisins lower blood pressure. But we could not find much objective evidence in the medical literature to support such a claim," said Harold Bays, MD, medical director and president of Louisville Metabolic and Atherosclerosis Research Center (L-MARC) and the study's lead investigator. "However, our study suggests if you have a choice between eating raisins or other snacks like crackers and chocolate chip cookies, you may be better off snacking on raisins at least with respect to blood pressure."

The researchers conducted a randomized controlled clinical trial to compare the blood pressure effect of eating raisins versus other snacks in 46 men and women with pre-hypertension. Participants were randomly assigned to snack on raisins or prepackaged commercial snacks that did not contain raisins, other fruits or vegetables but had the same number of calories per serving three times a day for 12 weeks. They found that compared to other snacks, raisins significantly reduced systolic blood pressure and mean diastolic blood pressure. Prepackaged snacks (including crackers and cookies) did not significantly reduce systolic or diastolic blood pressure.

"Raisins are packed with potassium, which is known to lower blood pressure," Bays said. "They are also a good source of antioxidant dietary fiber that may favorably alter the biochemistry of blood vessels, causing them to be less stiff, which in turn, may reduce blood pressure."