

New study shows pecans improved cardiometabolic health in obese patients

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Cardiometabolic risk is a relatively new term that refers to the chances of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, including type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Collectively, these conditions are the leading cause of preventable deaths worldwide.

Previous studies on pecans examined blood lipids changes. In addition to those markers, this is the first study to assess the effects of pecan consumption on other markers of cardiometabolic risk, including insulin resistance, glucose, insulin levels, and beta cell function, which is a measure of the pancreas's ability to produce and secrete insulin to help control blood sugar levels.

"Pecans are naturally high in unsaturated fats, including oleic and linoleic acids, so replacing a portion of the saturated fat in the diet with these more beneficial fats may explain some of the changes we observed, but bioactive compounds might also have contributed," said lead researcher Diane L. McKay, Ph.D. "Obesity, coupled with insulin resistance increases insulin demand and hyperfunction of pancreatic beta cells resulting in eventual dysfunction. Our results suggest nutrients in pecans may play a role in supporting normal insulin responses in adults who are overweight or obese, although we do not know the mechanism."