

Eat real food. Choose balance. And don't be afraid to enjoy it. After all... life can be a bit nuts!



The Wellness Column by Amanda J. Butler

As we move into a new year, many have been asking me the same thing: "Amanda, can you help make healthy choices simpler?" Less confusion, contradiction, fewer food rules, and more clarity around what actually supports long-term health. So throughout the year I am going to choose different topics each month, to provide an easy and simple guide to life.

So my first topic of the year is Nuts. Are they good for us? Bad for us? A superfood one day and inflammatory the next? Should we snack on them, avoid them, soak them, roast them—or just give up entirely?

The truth, as with most things in wellness, is that nuts can be powerful allies for healthy aging, bone density and metabolic health. If we choose the right ones, eat sensible amounts, and understand how to pair them.

Why nuts matter as we age

From our 40s onwards, nutrition becomes less about fueling workouts and more about preserving what we have—bone density, muscle mass, hormonal balance, mitochondrial function (our cells' energy factories), and brain and heart health. Protein intake becomes increasingly important, particularly for women, while inflammation and oxidative stress begin to play a bigger role in aging.

Nuts contribute to all of these, offering a combination of plant protein, healthy fats, minerals and antioxidants—but not all nuts deliver the same benefits.

The nuts best enjoyed in moderation (or avoided)!

Peanuts

Despite their popularity, peanuts aren't actually nuts—they're legumes. They are prone to cross-reaction with allergies, two molecules that place stress on the liver and immune system. They're also high in omega-6 fatty acids, which in excess can promote inflammation—not ideal for joint, bone or mitochondrial health. Add to that the highly processed peanut butters on supermarket shelves, and this is one nut best kept for very occasional.

Brazil Nuts

Nutritional powerhouses, yes—but also a classic case of "less is more." Brazil nuts are extremely rich in selenium, vital for thyroid health and antioxidant defence. Just one or two per day is enough. More than that, consumed regularly, can lead to selenium overload, affecting nerves, hair and nails.

Cashews

Cashews are another botanical impostor—technically seeds. While cashews can be a nutritious and delicious addition to a balanced diet, they can also pose several health risks—they are more acidic than most nuts and can be harder to digest, especially for those with sensitive stomachs or inflammatory conditions. Also high in fat, high in oxalates (which contribute to



kidney stone formation), as well as being highly allergenic. The occasionally, but not good as a daily staple for healthy aging.

Pine Nuts

Beloved in pesto, but surprisingly high in omega-6 fats. Overconsumption may increase oxidative stress and negatively affect mitochondrial function. The good news? Pesto made with walnuts or macadamias is equally delicious—and far more supportive.

The nuts that truly support healthy aging

Walnuts

Rich in omega-3s, walnuts support brain health and help reduce inflammation. A small handful per day, raw or lightly toasted, is plenty. Pair with berries or leafy greens to enhance antioxidant absorption. Because walnuts oxidise easily, store them in the fridge.

Almonds

Almonds are stars when it comes to bone health. They provide calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and vitamin E—all essential for bone density, cardiovascular repair and brain protection. Almonds also help stabilise blood sugar and lower cholesterol. A small handful per day, raw or lightly dry-roasted, works well. Soaking overnight can improve digestibility and improve bio-availability of vitamins and minerals.

Macadamia Nuts

These are particularly supportive for metabolic health. High in monounsaturated fats, macadamias help lower oxidative stress and support metabolic health. Around 10 per day is ideal. Pair with green tea or dark chocolate for antioxidant synergy.

Pistachios

Often underestimated, pistachios are excellent for circulation, eye health and vascular flexibility. Rich in L-arginine (a precursor to nitric oxide), they support healthy blood flow, blood pressure and even sexual health. Aim for 30–40 per day,

preferably unsalted and in their shells.

Hazelnuts

Hazelnuts support skin, nervous system and bone health thanks to their vitamin E and manganese content. They also contain polyphenols that help reduce oxidative damage. Enjoy a small handful a few times a week, ideally with berries or greens.

Pecans

Packed with antioxidants and monounsaturated fats, pecans support heart health and provide zinc and magnesium—important for immunity and bone strength.

Bone health and aging

Bone health is not just about calcium. It's about the delicate balance between minerals, hormones, inflammation and mitochondrial energy production. Nuts can play a valuable role, but only when eaten

in appropriate amounts and as part of a varied, whole-food diet.

Overconsumption—especially of roasted, salted or processed nuts—can tip the balance toward inflammation rather than resilience.

A small handful provides around 4–6 grams of protein, alongside fats that slow diges-

tion and stabilise blood sugar. For healthy aging, protein intake becomes essential—especially for women, to preserve muscle and bone density. Nuts work best as part of a protein-rich meal or snack, rather than on their own.

Helpful combinations include:
→ Nuts + Greek yogurt or kefir
→ Nuts + berries (vitamin C improves mineral absorption)
→ Nuts + leafy greens
→ Nuts + eggs or cottage cheese

A morning note for women and cortisol balance

For many women, especially in midlife, fasted morning exercise can spike cortisol, increasing stress rather than resilience. A simple solution is to eat something small before heading out.

A handful of almonds or walnuts with a piece of fruit or spoon of yogurt provide gentle protein, fat and carbohydrates—enough to stabilise blood sugar and cortisol without feeling heavy.

Amanda's Wellness Takeaway: How to eat nuts without overthinking it

Best timing

→ Before morning exercise: small handful of fruit or yogurt
→ After training: pair nuts with a clear protein source
→ Afternoon snack: nuts + berries to avoid energy crashes

Portion guide

→ Almonds: 10 almonds, small handful
→ Macadamias: 10
→ Pistachios: 30–40
→ Brazil nuts: 1–2 only

Storage

→ Airtight containers
→ Refrigerate walnuts and almonds
→ Avoid high-heat roasting
(Note: According to the British Heart Foundation, the general protein guideline for adults is 0.75 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day—60kgs requires a minimum of 45g/day. And if pregnant or very active you need to double that!)

So... are nuts healthy?

Absolutely—when chosen wisely and eaten mindfully.

They're not miracle foods, nor are they the villains they're sometimes made out to be. But we need to make more conscious choices—stop and think before you polish off the bowl of salted peanuts someone just put in front of you. Think of nuts as supporting actors in a bigger picture of healthy aging, movement, connection and nourishment.

And if this year is about making life simpler and kinder to your body, perhaps the real takeaway is this: Eat real food. Choose balance. And don't be afraid to enjoy it. After all... life can be a bit nuts!

Disclaimer: I am not a doctor; I am a nutritionist or medical professional. I am simply someone with a deep and ongoing interest in wellness, longevity and healthy ageing, with a passion for making wellness feel simpler, more accessible and less overwhelming.

In this column, wellness writer Amanda J. Butler explores the intersection of bone, wellness and conscious living in midlife.
—on Dr. Gennadiyeva

IT'S ALL A BIT NUTS!
Cutting Through the
Confusion on Nuts,
Aging and Bone Health

