

A handful of walnuts a day may enhance cognitive development in adolescents

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- According to a new study by the Institut d'Investigació Sanitària Pere Virgili (IISPV), in collaboration with ISGlobal and the Instituto Hospital del Mar de Investigaciones Médicas (IMIM)

□ Adolescent participants who followed a diet with walnuts showed improvements in attention functions, increases in functions related to fluid intelligence and improvements in neuropsychological functions.

□ Walnuts are the only tree nut with a significant amount of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an omega-3 fatty acid essential for the body and which plays a key role in brain development, especially in the developmental stage.

A new Spanish study published in the journal [eClinicalMedicine](#), from the prestigious publisher The Lancet Discovery Science, reveals that consuming walnuts regularly may have a positive impact on the cognitive development and psychological maturation of adolescents. Walnuts are the only tree nut with a significant amount of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an omega-3 fatty acid essential for the body and which plays a key role in brain development, especially in the developmental stage. The results of this study, led by the Institut d'Investigació Sanitària Pere Virgili (IISPV), with the collaboration of ISGlobal and the Hospital del Mar Institute for Medical Research (IMIM), are promising as it is the first research that shows the importance of eating walnuts during adolescence.

This research demonstrates that a healthy, balanced diet that provides essential nutrients, such as those provided by walnuts, can have a beneficial effect on the cognitive and psychological development of adolescents. "Adolescence is a period of brain refinement, connectivity and complex behaviors, so it remains sensitive to a number of environmental and lifestyle factors, including diet, from which it requires a large amount of energy and nutrients for proper



The California Walnuts

development. Walnuts are a nutrient-dense food and a rich plant-based source of ALA, an omega-3 fatty acid that provides energy and is essential for the body and its development. For this reason, walnuts are a great ally of adolescent health," says Dr. Jordi Julvez, principal investigator and coordinator of the Neuro Èpia Research Group of the IISPV.

This study involved 700 volunteers, specifically, high school students between 11 and 16 years of age from 12 different high schools. The participants were randomly divided into two groups: the control group and the experimental group. The experimental group was given packets containing 30 grams of walnuts (equivalent to a handful) and were instructed to consume them daily for 6 months. Participants who consumed walnuts for at least 100 days showed improvements in attention functions and those with symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) had better behavior in class, paying more attention to the teacher and being less hyperactive. In addition, the study found an increase in functions related to fluid intelligence, which is less influenced by learning and inherent to a person's biology.

Participants who followed more closely the recommended dose of walnuts and the number of days of consumption showed improvements in neuropsychological functions.

Adolescent Nutrition Habits in MENA Region

Over the last decade, the unhealthy lifestyle and poor dietary habits have been of great concern to the local health authorities in most Arab countries where obesity has reached an epidemic rate for both children and adults¹. According to the results of the National Health Survey 2017–2018, the obesity rate amongst children and adolescents aged between 5 and 17 years reached about 17.35 per cent². Apart from young people's unhealthy food habits in UAE, they also tend to have irregular eating patterns, which may include skipping breakfast³. The diet of Arab adolescents is characterized by a low intake of fruit, vegetables, and milk and a high intake of sugar-sweetened beverages, fast foods, and sweets⁴.

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For more information about the study, go to: [thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(23\)00131-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(23)00131-1/fulltext). For resource images and interviews with the researchers of the study, please contact Yes, We're Open: Èlia Bernabeu (+34 696 002 537) elia@yesweopen.com and Lorena De Marco (+34 622 221 464) lorena@yesweopen.com

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