

Research reveals consuming walnuts during pregnancy significantly improves neurodevelopmental outcomes in two-year-olds

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- Optimal nutrition is critical during pregnancy for both mother and child, especially for brain development and healthy birth weight. Lack of key nutrients increases the risk for low birth weight and developmental delays in children.

According to the joint UNICEF and WHO study of global, regional, and country estimates of low birth weight, the incidence of LBW in the Middle East and the Gulf countries was reported as Oman (9%), Lebanon (6%), Syria (6%), Algeria (7%), Kuwait (7%), Libya (7%), Tunisia (7%), Bahrain (8%), Jordan (10%), Qatar (10%), Morocco (11%), Saudi Arabia (11%), Egypt (12%), and Yemen (32%) ¹



Consuming walnuts during pregnancy

In a randomized controlled trial published in JAMA Network Open, and supported by the California Walnut Commission, researchers found incorporating walnuts and olive oil, in addition to following the Mediterranean Diet during pregnancy, improved child neurodevelopmental outcomes at age two, compared to those whose mothers didn't follow the diet during pregnancy. ²

The study, conducted in Spain, followed 1,221 pregnant women (19 to 23 weeks' gestation) at high risk of delivering newborns who were small for gestational age and were randomly divided into three groups:

- a Mediterranean diet group that included 450 grams of walnuts and two liters of free extra virgin olive oil every month
- a mindfulness-based stress reduction group
- or usual care

Among the 626 children born and eligible for the study, neurodevelopment scores at two years old were significantly higher in the cognitive and social-emotional domains in the Mediterranean diet group receiving walnuts and olive oil compared with children from the usual care group.

Dr. Dietician and Psychologist Pırl Şenol said; “Walnut consumption during pregnancy has been posited as potentially beneficial due to its rich nutrient profile, notably comprising omega-3 fatty acids, protein, vitamins, and minerals essential for maternal health and fetal development. Omega-3 fatty acids, such as alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), are particularly crucial as they play integral roles in neurological and visual development of the fetus. Therefore, integrating walnuts into a balanced diet during pregnancy may be advantageous, albeit specific recommendations should be guided by healthcare providers, considering individual dietary needs and health circumstances” 3-4.

For people across all lifespans, walnuts provide a host of important nutrients and phytochemicals, they also provide a notable amount of plant protein at 4 grams per ounce (12-14 halves), contribute to the daily intake of fiber (4 grams) and are a good source for magnesium (45 milligrams).⁵ Walnuts can play an important role in everyone’s daily eating pattern. They are the only tree nut that provide an excellent source of the plant-based omega-3 alpha-linolenic acid (2.5g/oz), which research indicates may play a role in heart health, brain health and healthy aging. 6-10

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