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RECIPE: WALDORF SALAD WITH GRAPES, ORANGES, AND WALNUTS

For thousands of years walnuts have been linked with good health. In medieval homes, walnuts were eaten to help digestion. Centuries later they were used to calm nerves and improve intellect. These days, there is proven reason to eat walnuts. Studies show that nuts, when eaten instead of foods high in saturated fat, can help lower blood cholesterol.

Nutrition: Like all nuts, walnuts are high in fat. But, 85 percent of that fat is the heart-healthy unsaturated kind. The monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in walnuts help lower total and LDL 'bad' cholesterol. Studies show that eating nuts regularly, especially instead of foods high in saturated fat, like meat and whole-milk dairy products, may help reduce the risk of heart disease. Furthermore, the phytochemicals in walnuts may inhibit cholesterol absorption. One-quarter cup, or one ounce, of walnuts contains:

- 180 calories
- 4 grams protein
- 18 grams total fat
- 1.5 grams saturated fat
- 2.5 grams monounsaturated fat
- 14 grams polyunsaturated fat
- 4 grams carbohydrates
- 1 gram fiber

Availability: Walnuts are available year-round, but are at peak after harvest, in the fall and early winter.

Choosing and storing: Walnuts in their shells should feel heavy and should not rattle when shaken, which indicates age. Walnuts in their shells should be kept in a cool, dry place and will last for six months. Shell walnuts just before using. Unopened packages of shelled walnuts will keep for several months in a dark, cool, dry place. For longer storage, refrigerate or freeze in air-tight containers for up to a year. Chop just before using. Chopped nuts lose freshness more quickly than whole.

How much: One pound of walnuts in the shell yields 1 2/3 cups nutmeats. One cup of shelled walnuts, not chopped, weighs 4 ounces.

Tips: Toasting nuts brings out their flavor. To toast walnuts, spread shelled, whole walnuts in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. To toast a small quantity, use the stove. Cook walnuts in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Stir constantly until they're lightly toasted, about 6 minutes. Immediately transfer toasted nuts to a bowl or they will continue to brown. Walnuts are easy to chop, especially after they've been toasted and are still warm. Though they may be eaten as is, walnuts may be added to:

- toast, English muffins
- hot and cold cereal
- rice, barley pilafs, poultry stuffing
- fruit and vegetable salads
- pancakes, muffin batters, and bread dough
- frozen yogurt

Waldorf Salad with Grapes, Oranges, and Toasted Walnuts

This low-fat version of the century-old Waldorf salad is made with grapes and oranges. It is delicious as a main dish salad or served with lean pork or poultry. Leave the skins on the apple for added color and fiber.

- 1/4 cup reduced-fat or fat-free mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup fat-free sour cream
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 cups diced, cored bright-red apple
- 1 cup seedless grape halves
- 1 cup bite-size orange sections
- 1/2 cup diced celery
- 1/4 cup chopped toasted walnuts
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint
- Salt and pepper to taste.

In a medium bowl combine mayonnaise, sour cream, lemon juice, and sugar. Whisk to combine. In a large bowl combine apple, grapes, oranges, celery, walnuts, and mint. Add mayonnaise mixture and mix gently with a rubber spatula. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed. Yield: 4 servings, about 5 cups.

The VCS NextMD Patient Portal

Virginia Cardiovascular Specialists is proud to offer our patients an exciting and valuable new service: The VCS NextMD Patient Portal offering personalized and secure online access to portions of your VCS medical record. It enables you to securely use the Internet to receive information about your cardiac health online, anytime. The VCS NextMD patient portal is a free service offered to all VCS patients. With NextMD patients are able to request prescription refills, make online payments, and access educational materials. In the future, patients will be able to fill out pre-visit paperwork, communicate with their VCS nurse and receive test results online. At your next visit, ask a VCS staff member about the patient portal — sign-up is easy!

Focus On... Coronary Artery Disease

Coronary artery disease is blockage of the coronary arteries, the blood vessels that provide blood to the heart. Coronary artery disease affects about 16 million men and women in the United States. It is the most common form of heart disease and is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. To understand coronary artery disease, it is helpful to understand how the heart works. Read on to learn more about the disease, its symptoms and treatments, and ways to prevent it.

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