

THE PISTACHIO PRINCIPLE: FOOLING YOURSELF FULL



Developed by behavioral eating expert Dr. James Painter, PhD, RD, Chair of the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Eastern Illinois University, the “Pistachio Principle” is a simple mindful eating concept that may help you fool yourself full – without feelings of deprivation.



The premise is that consumption of in-shell pistachios encourages slower eating while the leftover shells offer an important visual cue about the amount consumed; thereby, helping to reduce calorie intake.^{1,2} The technique is further enhanced by the fact that pistachios are one of the lowest calorie nuts and they are a good source of fiber.

IN-SHELL PISTACHIOS MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH REDUCED CALORIE CONSUMPTION

Illustrating the “Pistachio Principle,” Dr. Painter’s recent behavioral nutritional research published in the journal *Appetite*, observed that participants who consumed in-shell pistachios ate 41-percent fewer calories compared to those who consumed shelled pistachios.¹ Those who chose shelled pistachios consumed an average of 211 calories, while those who chose in-shell pistachios consumed an average of 125 calories suggesting that empty shells may be a helpful visual cue about how much has been eaten – thereby potentially encouraging reduced calorie consumption.

VISUAL CUES MAY HELP CUT CALORIE INTAKE

In a second preliminary behavioral nutritional study – also appearing in *Appetite* – Dr. Painter found that study participants who left discarded pistachio shells on their desk throughout the day cut their calorie consumption of pistachios by 18-percent compared to those who routinely cleared away their nut shells every two hours.² The shells may provide a visual cue that may help to curb consumption.

Although causation has not yet been proven, both studies underscore that in-shell pistachios can be a delicious, every day snack that might help support weight management efforts.

IN ADDITION TO THE “PISTACHIO PRINCIPLE,” DR. PAINTER OFFERS THE FOLLOWING TIPS FOR FOOLING YOURSELF FULL:

REDUCE THE SIZE OF PLATES, BOWLS AND GLASSES

Eat from smaller bowls, which allow you to eat less and still feel satisfied. Additionally, drink from tall, slender glasses rather than short, wide glasses to feel fuller on fewer calories.

BUY SMALLER PORTIONS

Purchase single-serving chips and small-size candy bars in place of family size bags.

CONSIDER ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

According to Dr. Painter, bright lighting and fast music can encourage you to eat faster and consume more calories. One study found when participants were instructed to eat at a fast or slow rate, consuming food at the slow rate helped participants achieve satiation quicker with less food.² This suggests that slow eating may prevent excessive food consumption.

PISTACHIO RESOURCES

PistachioHealthInstitute.org is the leading online source of information on the health and nutrition benefits of pistachios for both consumers and health professionals. It houses a comprehensive research library, with research updates and information from leading experts in the field of health and nutrition, including the Health Nut blog, Ask Our Expert section, and educational materials. The Institute is committed to advancing the understanding of the health benefits of pistachios, and continues to invest and support research at leading institutions around the world. “Like” Pistachio Health Institute on [Facebook](#) and follow [@PistachioHealth](#) on [Twitter](#).

IN A NUTSHELL:

A snack of in-shell pistachios may offer visual cues, potentially helping to reduce calorie intake without feelings of deprivation. This effect is known as the “Pistachio Principle” and is a delicious way to fool yourself full. Why choose any other nut?

REFERENCES

1. Honselman, C.S., Painter, J.E., Kennedy-Hagan, K.J., Halvorson, A., Rhodes, K., Brooks, T.L., & Skwir, K. “In-shell pistachio nuts reduce caloric intake compared to shelled nuts.” *Appetite*. 2011, 57(2):414-417.
2. Azrin, N.H., Kellen, M.J., Brooks, J., Ehle, C., & Vinas, V. “Relationship Between Rate of Eating and Degree of Satiation.” *Child & Fam Behav Therapy*. 2008, 30(4):355-364.