HOME

Just 2 Brazil Nuts a Day May Support Thyroid Health, Metabolism, and Blood Sugar

By bestfolkmedicine · 07/09/2026 · 8 min read



Sometimes the smallest foods pack the biggest nutritional punch—and Brazil nuts are a perfect example.

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You don't need a handful. In fact, **just one or two Brazil nuts can provide an impressive amount of selenium**, an essential trace mineral involved in thyroid function, antioxidant defense,

metabolism, and many other processes in the body.

Research has even found that eating **two Brazil nuts per day** can significantly improve selenium status.

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But can this tiny daily habit really support your thyroid, help with weight management, and contribute to healthier blood sugar?

Here's what the science actually says.

Why Brazil Nuts Are So Powerful

Brazil nuts come from the Amazonian tree *Bertholletia excelsa*. Although they contain healthy fats, protein, magnesium, zinc, vitamin E, and other nutrients, their standout feature is their exceptionally high selenium content.

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According to the National Institutes of Health, a single Brazil nut may contain around **68–91 micrograms of selenium**, although the exact amount can vary considerably depending on where the nuts were grown.

For perspective, the recommended dietary allowance for selenium for most adults is **55 micrograms per day**.

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That means just one or two nuts can often provide more than an entire day's requirement.

And selenium isn't just another mineral—it plays an especially important role in the thyroid.

1. Brazil Nuts May Support Healthy Thyroid Function

The thyroid gland contains a particularly high concentration of selenium.

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Your body uses selenium to produce proteins called **selenoproteins**, some of which help regulate thyroid hormone metabolism and protect thyroid tissue against oxidative stress.

Selenium-dependent enzymes are also involved in converting thyroxine, or **T4**, into the more biologically active thyroid hormone **T3**.

This is one reason inadequate selenium intake can interfere with optimal thyroid physiology.

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The NIH confirms that selenium is necessary for normal thyroid hormone production and thyroid gland function.

What happens when you eat two Brazil nuts?

A randomized controlled trial published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* examined 59 adults who consumed either:

- two Brazil nuts daily,
- 100 micrograms of selenium as a supplement, or
- a placebo.

After 12 weeks, the Brazil nut group experienced a **64.2% increase in plasma selenium**. Researchers concluded that two Brazil nuts per day were about as effective at improving selenium status as the selenium supplement used in the study.

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Brazil nuts also increased activity of glutathione peroxidase, an important selenium-dependent antioxidant enzyme.

Another small study involving selenium-deficient patients receiving hemodialysis found that daily Brazil nut consumption significantly increased selenium levels and was associated with improvements in T3 and free T4 levels. However, this was a specialized patient population and the study did not include a control group, so the findings should not be generalized to everyone.

Important distinction

Brazil nuts can help you obtain adequate selenium, but **they are not a treatment for hypothyroidism, Hashimoto's disease, thyroid nodules, or other thyroid disorders**.

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If selenium intake is already adequate, consuming additional selenium does not necessarily make the thyroid work better.

2. Could Brazil Nuts Help With Blood Sugar?

There is also interesting research linking nuts with improved metabolic health.

Nuts contain a combination of:

- unsaturated fats,
- protein,
- fiber,
- magnesium,
- antioxidants,
- and plant compounds

that may help influence insulin sensitivity and the way glucose is handled by the body.

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A systematic review of clinical trials specifically examining Brazil nut consumption found that some studies reported improvements in fasting glucose among healthy individuals.

One study involving 130 healthy adults asked participants to eat **one Brazil nut daily for eight weeks**. Fasting glucose levels decreased after the intervention, although researchers also found that individual genetic differences influenced the response.

The wider research on nuts is also encouraging.

A meta-analysis of 40 randomized controlled trials involving 2,832 participants found that eating tree nuts or peanuts was associated with improvements in **fasting insulin and insulin resistance**, although there was no significant overall reduction in fasting glucose or HbA1c.

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So it would be an exaggeration to say that two Brazil nuts “lower blood sugar.” A more accurate conclusion is that nuts can be part of an eating pattern that supports metabolic health and insulin sensitivity.

For someone with diabetes, Brazil nuts should complement—not replace—prescribed medication, glucose monitoring, exercise, and an appropriate dietary plan.

3. Can Two Brazil Nuts a Day Help With Weight Loss?

This is where many online claims go too far.

Brazil nuts do **not burn belly fat**, speed up metabolism dramatically, or cause weight to fall off simply because you eat two every morning.

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However, nuts can still fit surprisingly well into a weight-management diet.

Brazil nuts contain fat and calories, but they also provide protein and fiber, nutrients that can contribute to satiety and may make it easier to avoid less nutritious snacks.

Research involving nuts overall suggests that incorporating them into the diet does not automatically cause weight gain, despite their high calorie density.

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Brazil nut-specific evidence is more limited.

In one randomized trial, women with overweight or obesity followed calorie-restricted diets for eight weeks. One group also consumed 30 grams of cashews plus 15 grams of Brazil nuts daily. Researchers found beneficial changes in body composition and certain cardiometabolic markers, although the intervention involved substantially more than two Brazil nuts and combined the nuts with calorie restriction.

This matters because weight loss still fundamentally depends on overall energy intake, diet quality, physical activity, sleep, hormones, medications, and numerous other factors.

Think of Brazil nuts as **a nutrient-dense food that can fit into a healthy weight-loss plan**, rather than a weight-loss remedy.

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4. Selenium Provides Powerful Antioxidant Support

Another reason Brazil nuts have attracted scientific interest is their influence on the body's antioxidant defenses.

Selenium is incorporated into glutathione peroxidase and other antioxidant enzymes that help protect cells from oxidative damage.

The randomized study using two Brazil nuts daily found increased glutathione peroxidase activity as selenium status improved.

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A broader systematic review of Brazil nut clinical trials also found improvements in selenium status and/or glutathione peroxidase activity across studies assessing antioxidant status.

Supporting antioxidant defense may be particularly relevant because oxidative stress is associated with aging and numerous chronic diseases.

That doesn't make Brazil nuts a "detox" treatment—but it does make them an extraordinarily concentrated source of an important micronutrient.

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How Many Brazil Nuts Should You Eat?

With many healthy foods, more is often fine.

Brazil nuts are different.

Because their selenium concentration can be extremely high, **one or two per day is generally plenty**.

The NIH lists the adult tolerable upper intake level for selenium at **400 micrograms per day** and specifically warns that eating too many Brazil nuts can push selenium intake above safe levels.

Chronic excessive selenium intake can lead to a condition called **selenosis**.

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Possible signs include:

- garlic-like breath odor,
- metallic taste,
- nausea or diarrhea,
- brittle nails,
- hair loss,
- skin changes,
- and nervous-system problems.

For that reason, Brazil nuts aren't the kind of food you should mindlessly eat by the bowlful every day.

And if you're already taking a supplement containing selenium, check the label before adding Brazil nuts regularly.

The Simplest Way to Eat Them

No complicated recipe is required.

Try eating **one or two plain, unsalted Brazil nuts** with breakfast or as part of a snack.

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You could also chop them over:

- Greek yogurt,
- oatmeal,
- chia pudding,
- fruit,
- or a salad.

Because selenium content varies dramatically between individual nuts, there is no need to obsess about eating exactly two every single day. The goal is simply to make selenium-rich foods part of a balanced diet without chronically overdoing them.

The Bottom Line

Two Brazil nuts aren't a miracle cure—but they may be one of the most nutrient-dense additions you can make to your diet.

Their extraordinary selenium content can help support normal **thyroid hormone metabolism and antioxidant defenses**, while the healthy fats, protein, minerals, and plant compounds found in nuts may contribute to **metabolic health, satiety, and healthier insulin function**.

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Research shows that even one or two Brazil nuts can dramatically improve selenium status.

The key word, however, is **support**.

Brazil nuts do not replace thyroid medication, diabetes treatment, or the dietary and lifestyle changes required for sustainable weight loss.

With Brazil nuts, more isn't better.

Sometimes **one or two really are enough**.

Sources

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7. Brazilian Nuts Study: Brazil and cashew nut consumption, body composition and cardiometabolic health.

This article is intended for educational purposes and is not a substitute for individualized medical advice. People with thyroid disease, diabetes, kidney disease, nut allergies, or those taking selenium-containing supplements should discuss major dietary or supplement changes with their healthcare professional.

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