

Is Chocolate That Healthy?

It is great news that research has found a food that lowers blood pressure and is healthy for the heart and maybe more. The problem is that the chocolate Americans consume most is not the kind that was studied. The more popular kinds of chocolate have little or no positive effect on your health. Only certain chocolate may be healthy.

Dark chocolate is the chocolate that was found to have positive effects on blood pressure. Participants, either given dark, milk, or white chocolate every day were evaluated in different studies. It turns out that dark chocolate contains important antioxidants called phenols. These natural compounds from the cocoa bean are known to increase nitric oxide, reduce platelet aggregation, and inhibit oxidation of LDL cholesterol. Cocoa can decrease blood pressure, reduce cholesterol, and increase your insulin sensitivity. Milk and white chocolate are low in these antioxidants and do not have the same effect.

The problem is how chocolate is processed in this country. White chocolate, regardless of where you get it, actually contains no cocoa at all and is made only from cocoa butter; just the fat from the cocoa beans. It also contains no phenols. Most of the other chocolate we eat is made with "dutch" cocoa. The cocoa beans are treated with an alkaline solution to make them dark in color and reduce the natural bitterness from the plant. But it also reduces almost 90% of the phenols and most of its healthy benefits. The other problem is that when made into milk chocolate, the milk seems to prevent the phenols from being absorbed and, thus, negating any possible benefit from the chocolate.

The best chocolate for your health appears to be dark chocolate. In the European studies done, participants ate 100gm of chocolate a day (100 grams equals approx. 3.5 ounces). This is the equivalent to 2 1/2 regular size Hershey's bars. It also added about 550 calories to their diet. They were instructed to substitute this amount of calories from other foods they normally ate each day. You would have to do the same or forego its healthy benefits by increasing your waistline. European chocolate in general is healthier than that found in America due to the fact that it is less processed than ours and contains more of the heart healthy antioxidants. Dark chocolate is an acquired taste for most Americans since it is much more bitter than its milky counterpart.

So why is this research being touted as the 'best medical news in ages'? It appears to be one more way we look to justify the unhealthy diets we follow. When people hear that chocolate is now healthy, they don't hear any of the other restrictions involved, and don't want to. In fact, most people wouldn't want to change to a more bitter tasting chocolate and also cut out over 500 calories from their diets as they did in the studies. Our diets already have enough sweets and this type of news only fuels the diabetic and obesity epidemics. This kind of medical news will only make most people add extra calories to their diets and increase their health problems.

These studies do look promising but there still is no information on how long these benefits last, how many phenols need to be eaten or how often. Stick with the darkest chocolate, if you must, and balance out your calories. Until we have more information, chocolate should remain a treat and not a treatment.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

More information on the benefits of green tea can be found at <http://www.natural-weight-loss-programs.com/greentea.htm> . Free trials green tea patches and instant beverages are available while supplies last. Find out the benefit of green tea for yourself today. And, learn more about the new superfood - the amazon super berry - acai. Acai may be the most nutritious and powerful food in the world. MonaVie is the next generation of health food.