

Dark Chocolate: Take a Bite for Health



Craving chocolate? Good news: Indulging every now and then could have unexpected health benefits. In some studies, eating chocolate has been associated with a lower risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, and diabetes. While research continues, experts confirm that chocolate (in moderation) can be part of an overall healthy diet.

Cocoa Power

Flavanols in cocoa are the real health superstars. They're a type of antioxidant linked with several cardiovascular benefits, such as better blood flow and less inflammation.

The more natural cocoa in a product, the more flavanols it contains. That's why dark chocolate is well known as the healthier choice. It's made up of 50% to 90% cocoa solids, whereas milk chocolate has only 10% to 50% cocoa solids. Not to mention, the sugar and dairy in milk chocolate add unhealthy calories.

At the store, look for plain dark chocolate with the highest cocoa content you can find—at least 70%. When buying cocoa powder, pick a brand marked nonalkalized. Alkalizing, or “Dutching,” steals nutrients.

Bittersweet Treat

If the dark chocolate or cocoa flavor is too bitter for your taste, here are some tips to enjoy it as a healthy snack:

- Pair a few squares of dark chocolate with fresh fruit and nuts
- Break the dark chocolate into smaller pieces, melt it in the microwave and then drizzle it over oatmeal or yogurt
- Using a blender, mix 1 to 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder with a frozen banana. The end result: a dairy-free version of chocolate ice cream!