

10 health reasons you should eat more Chocolate

Description



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Chocolate is the ultimate comfort food, a sure-fire stand-by in times of stress, a reliable source of consolation when life has let us down, and a mood-enhancer and romance-inducer in more positive circumstances. But is it at all healthy?

If you scoff lots of it, obviously not. But there are a host of medically proven ways in which good chocolate, which is to say dark chocolate, with a cocoa percentage of around seventy per cent or more “ really is good for us. Research is continuing all the time, and experts have already found that it is good for the heart, circulation and brain, and it has been suggested that it may be beneficial in such major health challenges as autism, obesity, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease and even ageing in general.

1. It’s good for the heart and circulation

A recent study found that dark chocolate [helps restore flexibility to arteries](#) while also preventing white blood cells from sticking to the walls of blood vessels “ both common causes of artery clogging.

2. It reduces risk of stroke

[Researchers in Finland](#) have found that consumption lowers the risk of suffering a stroke “ by a staggering 17 per cent average in the group of men they tested.

3. It’s mineral rich

Dark chocolate [is packed with beneficial minerals](#) such as potassium, zinc and selenium, and a 100g bar of dark (70 per cent or more) choc provides 67 per cent of the RDA of iron.

4. It reduces cholesterol

Consumption of cocoa has been shown to [reduce levels of “bad” cholesterol \(LDL\) and raise levels of “good” cholesterol](#), potentially lowering the risk of cardiovascular disease.

5. It’s good for your skin

The flavonols in dark chocolate [can protect the skin against sun damage](#) (though you’d probably better still slap on some sun cream).

6. It can help you lose weight

[Chocolate can help you lose weight](#). Really. Neuroscientist Will Clower says a small square of good choc melted on the tongue 20 minutes before a meal triggers the hormones in the brain that say “I’m full”, cutting the amount of food you subsequently consume. Finishing a meal with the same small trigger could reduce subsequent snacking.

7. It’s good for mothers and babies

[A Finnish study](#) found that it reduced stress in expectant mothers, and that the babies of such mothers smiled more often than the offspring of non-chocolate-eating parents.

8. It may prevent diabetes

It sounds mad, but [cocoa has been shown to improve insulin sensitivity](#). So dark chocolate “ in moderation “ might delay or prevent the onset of diabetes.

9. Chocolate is good for the brain

Flavanols are thought to reduce memory loss in older people, and the anti-inflammatory qualities of [dark chocolate have been found beneficial in treating brain injuries](#) such as concussion.

10. Chocolate makes you feel better

Chocolate contains phenylethylamine (PEA), which is the same chemical that your brain creates when you feel like you're falling in love. PEA encourages your brain to release feel-good endorphins.

As a chocolate lover I would also add that certain kinds can be good for the soul: this is chocolate for which the raw materials have been grown with care by farmers who are properly rewarded for their work; then processed by people who take time and care in their work, and finished by chocolatiers who love what they do. It will not be mass-produced, and it may not be cheap. But it will be good for you, heart and soul.

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