

Chocolate eaters have lower body mass

Description



Chocolate-eaters have lower body mass

Chocolate's benefits are rooted in antioxidant polyphenols

Healthy people who exercise and also eat chocolate regularly tend to have a lower body mass index than those who eat the rich sweets less often, a study suggested on Monday.

The survey of a population of more than 1,000 adults, published as a research letter in the Archives of Internal Medicine, reinforces the notion that chocolate packs heart healthy benefits, despite its high calorie and sugar content.

People in the study, whose ages ranged from 20 to 85, reported eating chocolate an average of twice a week and exercising an average of 3.6 times a week.

Those who said they ate chocolate more often than the norm tended to have a lower ratio of weight over height, a calculation made by taking a person's weight and dividing it by their height times two.

A normal BMI is typically 18.5 to 24.9, while people who figure lower are considered underweight and those above 25 are overweight.

“Adults who consumed chocolate more frequently had a lower BMI than those who consumed chocolate less often,” said the study led by [Beatrice Golomb](#) and colleagues at the University of

California San Diego.

“Our findings” that more frequent chocolate intake is linked to lower BMI “are intriguing,” it added, calling for more detailed research and perhaps a randomized clinical trial of chocolate’s metabolic benefits.

While the research stopped short of establishing a reasonable or beneficial limit for chocolate-eating, experts urged moderation.

“Before you start eating a chocolate bar a day to keep the doctor away, remember that a chocolate bar can contain over 200 calories which mostly come from saturated fats and sugar,” said [Nancy Copperman](#), director of Public Health Initiatives at the North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System in New York.

“Consider limiting your chocolate fix to a one ounce (28 grams) portion of dark chocolate or adding cocoa powder which is very low in fat to your food once a day,” said Copperman, who was not involved in the study.

Chocolate’s benefits are rooted in antioxidant polyphenols which can improve blood pressure, and also help lower cholesterol levels and blood sugar.

Other studies have even linked chocolate to a lower risk of death by heart attack.

Chocolate’s curious ability to improve heart health is usually considered as part of a lifestyle that includes exercise and moderation in diet, according to [Suzanne Steinbaum](#), director of women and heart disease at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York, who was not involved in the study.

“We have seen in multiple studies the benefits of chocolate, and yet again, we see as part of an overall healthy lifestyle, chocolate does not add to weight gain, but in fact, might help control it,” she said.

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Understanding Body Mass Index



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BMI stands for Body Mass Index. It is important to know what your BMI does and does not indicate about your weight, health and lifestyle choices. Your BMI is calculated from your *height* and *weight*. It is a fairly reliable indicator of body fat for most adults, with athletes and the elderly being two exceptions. BMI is an inexpensive alternative to direct measurements of body fat, such as underwater weighing, but it is only one of many factors that you and your health-care provider should use in evaluating your health status.

Calculating Your BMI

You can calculate your BMI with this formula: $\text{weight (in pounds)} / [\text{height (in inches)} \times \text{height (in inches)}] \times 703$.

The [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#) uses BMI to define terms like overweight and obese:

Underweight: BMI below 18.5

Normal weight: 18.5 to 24.9

Overweight: 25.0 to 29.9

Obese: 30.0 and above.

BMI and Your Health

People with very low or very high BMIs tend to have the greatest health risks. Even so, BMI is only one factor in your overall health. For example, if your BMI falls into the *normal* weight category, you will still have a higher risk of health problems if you:

Smoke cigarettes

Do not participate in regular physical activity

Eat lots of nutrient-poor foods with added fat and sugar.

If your BMI is in the *overweight* category, you will have a lower overall health risk if you:

Get regular physical activity

Have blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels that are within normal limits.

This means BMI is one aspect of your health to discuss with your care provider. Together, you can decide if other assessments need to be done and whether lifestyle changes such as eating smarter and moving more will improve your health.

BMI Measurements in Children and Teens

While BMI calculations for children and teens use the same formula as adults, criteria used to define *obesity* and *overweight* are different for young people because of factors like body fat differences between boys and girls and variations in body fat at different ages.

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