

Chocolate might be the healthiest indulgence ever

Description



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Mineral rich

You might not intuitively think so, but chocolate is very rich in minerals. A standard 100 gram dark bar contains 98 percent of a person's recommended daily value of manganese, 89 percent DV of copper, 67 percent DV of iron, 58 percent DV of Magnesium, 31 percent DV of phosphorous, 22 percent DV of Zinc, 21 percent DV of potassium, and 10 percent DV of selenium. We literally cannot survive without these minerals, and unfortunately many of us who live in modern civilizations are not getting the recommended amount through our diet.

An antioxidant powerhouse

Made up of more than just minerals, chocolate also contains the health-promoting compounds caffeine, theobromine, resveratrol, epicatechin, anandamide, tryptophan, phenylethylamine and polyphenol.

These compounds are known to increase energy, focus, and positive feelings. The antioxidant content is mind boggling too. Chocolate has the highest ORAC score, which is used to measure the antioxidant content of foods, of any commonly eaten whole food. It is estimated to have an ORAC of about 55,000, which is nearly three times that of blackberries, the highest fruit on the list. Antioxidants have been shown to reduce damage to cells and potentially contribute to the prevention of major diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Heart disease

So what does the research say about chocolate preventing disease? One study of 470 elderly men over a 15-year period found that the men who consumed the most were 50 percent less likely to die of a heart attack than the men who consumed the least chocolate. Another study of almost 5,000 men and women found that those who ate chocolate at least five times a week were 57 percent less likely to be diagnosed with heart disease.

Stroke of Luck

Heart disease isn't the only thing that appears to decrease with chocolate consumption. A study of more than 30,000 women between the ages of 49 and 83 found that the more the women ate, the less likely they were to suffer a stroke. The women were followed a full decade, and the lowest chocolate eaters had stroke rates of 7.8/1000 while the highest eaters had stroke rates of 2.5/1000.

Lowered stress levels

Chocolate may even be able to decrease stress, something that many of us could use in our current fast paced world. Researchers gave study participants 40 grams (a bit less than half of a standard bar) of dark chocolate every day for two weeks. Blood levels of cortisol and catecholamines were measured at the beginning and end of the study, and perhaps unsurprisingly they were found to be markedly decreased after the two weeks of consumption.

So next time someone questions your habit, tell them it's for your health. Of course, dark chocolate has a much higher cacao content and lower sugar levels, so go for the dark stuff if you can. If you don't like 90 percent cacao bars, start with something lower like a 50% cacao bar. Your taste buds will eventually adjust to a less sugary flavor, so you can enjoy the health benefits of dark chocolate while also enjoying the taste.

Sources for this article include:

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<http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

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