

Chocolate: Should We Take It in a Pill?

Description



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The scientific case for the health benefits of cocoa is so strong that some experts are calling for the development of a supplement – a chocolate pill, if you will.

There is –growing interest in developing cocoa extract, and potentially certain dietary chocolate preparations, as a natural source to maintain and promote brain health, and in particular to prevent age-related neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease, writes neurology professor Giulio Maria Pasinetti in the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease.

But brain health is just one of the areas in which cocoa has shown promise.

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[Research](#) suggests that the phytochemicals in cocoa may help protect against cancer. Other [studies](#) have linked cocoa intake to improved cardiovascular health, lower blood pressure and improved blood flow to the brain.

[Other findings](#) suggest that dark chocolate (with less added sugar) may help stabilize blood sugar levels and reduce the risk of obesity.

Scientists have also largely set aside worries about the fat in chocolate, noting that only one of the three types of fat in chocolate may have a negative effect on cholesterol. The other two have either a positive or neutral effect.

Several important factors would have to be considered, however, to develop a truly effective cocoa supplement.

Perhaps the most important is how the cocoa is processed. Some of the most popular processing techniques have been shown to strip chocolate of up to 90 percent of its healthy phytochemicals, noted Dr. Pasinetti.

Other concerns include a limited global supply of cocoa as well as the beans' susceptibility to disease.

The development of a successful supplement will require collaboration between cocoa growers, wholesalers and the biomedical community, added Pasinetti.

Supplements often make an easy way to gulp down an otherwise unappetizing nutrient or herb, but chocolate supplements would suffer the opposite fate: they'd be more potent than their candy-wrapped cousins, but they would likely lack the same great taste.

So this may be the rare instance when it comes to healthy eating in which you can have your (chocolate) cake and eat it, too.

[Laine Bergeson](#)

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Date Created

September 23, 2015

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