

20 health benefits of eating chocolate

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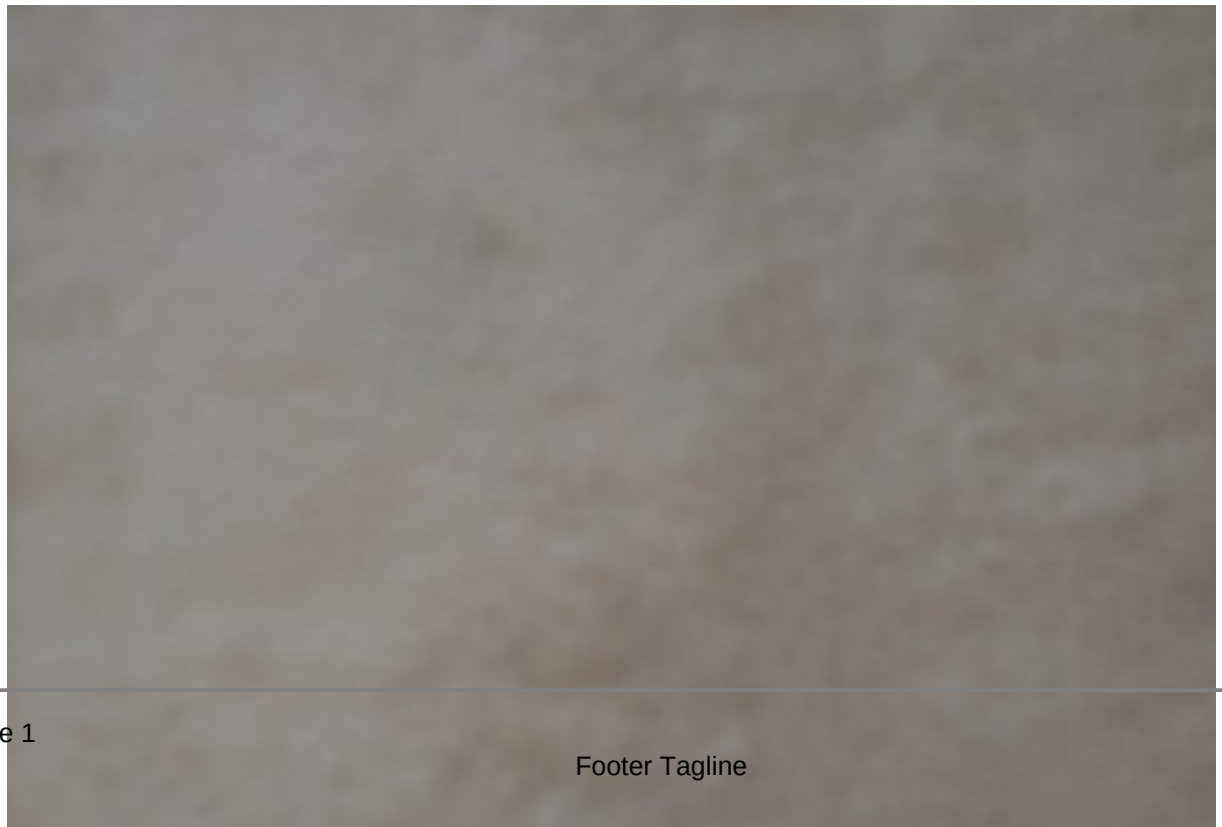
Want to improve your health? **Eat chocolate!**

Chocolate is often labelled as a cheat food, guilty pleasure, or rich dessert but these categorisations neglect its **health benefits.**

Thatâ€™s why weâ€™ve come up with 10 unexpected health benefits of eating chocolate.

Obviously chocolate offers fewer health benefits the more it is processed. Therefore, health experts usually recommend eating **unsweetened, raw dark chocolate.**

But processed chocolate can still give you a **superfood boost** as long as there arenâ€™t too many additives.



Picture credit: Anete Lusina

1. High in Antioxidants

First of all, flavanols (naturally-occurring compounds) found in plant foods such as cocoa act as antioxidants and help **counteract free radicals** in the body.

2. Blood Pressure Benefits

Next, dark chocolate has been shown to **lower blood pressure** in people with high stress levels or chronically elevated blood pressure.

3. Lower LDL Cholesterol

And eating dark chocolate on a regular basis has been attributed to a reduction in LDL (low-density lipoprotein) **cholesterol** by as much as 10%.

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4. Natural Anti-Depressant

Of course, chocolate is also rich in seratonin, which is a **natural anti-depressant**.

Eating chocolate is also thought to stimulate endorphin production. In turn, this helps to create feelings of pleasure and satisfaction.

5. It May Fight Cancer

Chocolate has been found to inhibit cell division and **reduce inflammation** in some patients and could help reduce cancer risk or cancer severity.



Picture credit: cottonbro studio

6. Prevents Tooth Decay

Theobromine â€“ a natural component of chocolate â€“ is thought to help **prevent tooth decay** by eliminating the key culprit: oral cavity bacteria streptococcus mutans.

7. Longer Life

A Dutch study followed 200 men over 20 years and found that those who consumed larger amounts of chocolate lived longer.

Harvard used similar methods and found the same results. Learn more about chocolateâ€™s secrets of **longevity** here.

8. Less Disease

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The same Harvard and Dutch studies have linked chocolate with contracting less diseases and consequential **longer lifespans.**

9. High in Magnesium

Cacao is extremely high in magnesium, an important mineral that helps to regulate the digestive, neurological, and cardiovascular systems for **overall health.**

10. Brain Health

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University found that red wine and dark chocolate can protect the brain following a stroke by **shielding nerve cells** from further damage.



11. Higher Intelligence

A study at Californiaâ€™s Salk Institute found that epicatechin, a chemical in chocolate, may **improve memory.**

12. Cough Relief

An ingredient in chocolate may actually be a more effective cough medicine than traditional remedies, a new study suggests.

Not only that, UK-based research found the cocoa-derived compound had none of the side effects associated with standard drug treatments for persistent coughs.

Theobromine, which occurs in high levels in chocolate, has been found to quiet coughs and soothe throats without the traditional side effects of medication.

13. Sun Protection

London researchers found that, after three months of eating chocolate with high levels of **flavanols**, their subjectsâ€™ skin took twice as long to develop reddening associated with the beginning of a burn.

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14. Reduced Stress

Swiss scientists found that when people with high anxiety levels ate an ounce-and-a-half of dark chocolate every day for two weeks, their **stress levels** were significantly lower and the metabolic effects of stress were partially mitigated.

15. Diabetes Prevention

Dark chocolate is actually thought to help **lower blood sugar levels** and reduce the risk of heart disease.



Picture credit: PhotoMIX Company

16. Insulin Regulation

Frequent consumers of chocolate have been correlated with **higher insulin regulation** and response.

17. A Healthier Heart

In a nine-year Swedish study of more than 31,000 women, those who ate one to two servings of **dark chocolate** each week were 33% less likely to experience heart failure.

18. Healthy Fats

Chocolate contains **Oleic acid,** a healthy monosaturated fat that is also found in olive oil.

19. It Improves Vision

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Chocolate improves blood flow particularly to the brain and the retina, allowing consumers to experience **better short term vision.**

20. Improves Blood Flow

Finally, cocoa has anti-clotting and blood-thinning properties that work in a similar way to aspirin, which can improve blood flow and increase circulation.



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sephra