

DARK CHOCOLATE – THE HEALTHY INDULGENCE!

Dr. Cathy's Life Coach Tips

6 health benefits to justify why you smile so much while eating an ounce of dark chocolate!

1. Good for Your Heart: Studies show that eating an ounce of dark chocolate two or three times each week helps lower your blood pressure, improves blood flow and helps prevent formation of blood clots. **Flavanols** are the main type of flavonoid found in cocoa and chocolate and not only have antioxidant qualities but also positively influence vascular health as described above.

2. Good for Your Brain: Dark chocolate increases blood flow to the brain so it can help improve cognitive function and also helps reduce your risk of stroke. Dark chocolate contains phenylethylamine (PEA), the same chemical your brain creates when you feel like you're falling in love. PEA encourages your brain to release endorphins, so eating dark chocolate will make you feel happier.

Dark chocolate also contains caffeine, a mild stimulant. However, dark chocolate contains much less caffeine than coffee. A 1.5 ounce bar of dark chocolate contains 27 mg of caffeine, compared to the 200 mg found in an eight ounce cup of coffee.

3. Helps Control Blood Sugar: Dark chocolate helps keep your blood vessels healthy and your circulation unimpaired to protect against type 2 diabetes. The flavonoids in dark chocolate also help reduce insulin resistance by helping your cells to function normally and regain the ability to use your body's insulin efficiently. Dark chocolate has a low glycemic index, meaning it won't cause huge spikes in blood sugar levels.

4. Full of Antioxidants: Dark chocolate is loaded with antioxidants that help free your body of free radicals, which cause oxidative damage to cells. Free radicals are implicated in the aging process and may be a cause of cancer, so eating antioxidant rich foods like dark chocolate can protect you from many types of cancer and slow the signs of aging.

5. Contains Theobromine: Dark chocolate contains theobromine, which has been shown to harden tooth enamel. That means that dark chocolate, unlike most other sweets, lowers your risk of getting cavities if you practice proper dental hygiene. The bonus is that your dentist will be pleased!

6. High in Vitamins and Minerals: Dark chocolate contains vitamins and minerals that can support your health. Dark chocolate contains some of the following vitamins and minerals in high concentrations:

- Potassium
- Copper
- Magnesium
- Iron

Copper and potassium in dark chocolate help prevent against stroke and cardiovascular ailments. The iron in chocolate protects against iron deficiency anemia, and the magnesium in chocolate helps prevent type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.



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CHOOSE and CONSUME Dark Chocolate Wisely!

Not all chocolate is created equal. Dark chocolate contains a lot more cocoa than other forms of chocolate. And standard chocolate manufacturing (fermentation, alkalizing, roasting, etc.) destroys up to half of the flavonoids. But chocolate companies have now learned to make dark chocolate that keeps up to 95% of its flavonoids. Best choices are dark chocolate over milk chocolate (especially milk chocolate that is loaded with other fats and sugars) and cocoa powder that has not undergone Dutch processing (cocoa that is treated with an alkali to neutralize its natural acidity).

Remember moderation is key! A 1-ounce bar of dark chocolate has about 170 calories and 12 grams of fat, so indulge sparingly and keep your exercise and nutritional routine in balance. And keep on smiling!

