

Title:

Healthy Chocolate is NOT an Oxymoron!

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493

Summary:

There is a large body of scientific evidence that supports the notion that the right chocolate is not only harmless, but that it can actually contribute to health and longevity.

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Article Body:

Healthy chocolate? How can that be? After all, we've been trained to think of chocolate as a guilty indulgence at best, and as a health disaster at worst. Yet there is a large body of scientific evidence that supports the notion that chocolate is not only harmless, but that it can actually contribute to health and longevity.

There's Chocolate and Then There's Chocolate

That's not to say that all chocolate is created equal. If you think that those sugary confections you find in candy stores and on grocery store shelves are nothing but empty calories, you're not far off the mark. Chocolate candies are often full of the refined sugars, milk fats, and hydrogenated oils that are important to avoid.

But those unhealthy ingredients are masking a dark healthy chocolate that is filled with antioxidants, flavonoids, and amino acids that can contribute to health and well being. Unprocessed cocoa has antioxidants that can slow the aging process and cellular decay, as well as flavonoids that have been shown to be beneficial to cardiovascular health. These cardiovascular benefits include improving blood flow, lowering LDL cholesterol, and reducing blood pressure. Dark chocolate also has essential amino acids like tryptophan, as well as alkaloids like theobromine and phenethylamine, all of which can help elevate and regulate moods.

Latest Trends in Healthy Chocolate

As the concept of healthy chocolate gains momentum, products are being brought to market that combine the best qualities of chocolate with those of other ingredients. The mixture produces a high-powered blast of benefits with all of the intrinsic satisfaction that eating chocolate brings.

What makes healthy chocolate different from the kind you find within candy bar wrappers? First, there are no sugars, milk fats, or hydrogenated oils. Second, it has not been subjected to what is called the Dutch process, whereby an alkali is introduced that all but destroys the antioxidants. Rather, it is cold pressed to preserve the antioxidants and nutrients. Third, it is often combined with Acai berries and blueberries to further boost its antioxidant properties - so much so that some products give you the equivalent of a half-pound of spinach or three-quarters of a pound of broccoli in one small nugget. Fourth, the dark chocolate has no trans fat, no wax, and no fillers.

#### Healthy Chocolate as a Weight Loss Tool

Unarguably, it's counterintuitive to think of chocolate as being a central component of a weight loss plan. But healthy chocolate - without the additives, sugar, and milk fat - can, indeed, help you lose weight. Eating a nugget with a glass of water about a half hour before a meal can quell hunger and satisfy chocolate cravings. You'll eat less at meals and get a boost of nutrients in the process. Similarly, eating a nugget as a snack is a healthy alternative to more calorie-laden fare.

The bottom line is that you can incorporate healthy chocolate into your diet without even a twinge of guilt. What a relief and a blessing!