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**BBC**

**Chocolate may protect the brain and heart**



Eating high levels of chocolate could reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, according to a review of previous research.

Data from 114,009 patients suggested risk was cut by about a third, according to a study [published on the BMJ website](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.d4488).

But the researchers warned that excessive consumption would result in other illnesses.

The British Heart Foundation said there were better ways to protect the heart.

The analysis, conducted by scientists at the University of Cambridge, compared the risk to the brain and heart in groups of people who reported eating low levels of chocolate, fewer than two bars per week, with those eating high levels - more than two bars per week.

Chocolate shield

It showed that the "highest levels of chocolate consumption were associated with a 37% reduction in cardiovascular disease and a 29% reduction in stroke compared with the lowest levels".

One of the researchers, Dr Oscar Franco, said chocolate was known to decrease blood pressure.

He told the BBC the findings were "promising", but needed further research to confirm any protective effect.

The study also warns that chocolate can lead to weight gain and Type 2 diabetes.

It suggested that chocolate could one day be used to protect from heart problems and stroke - if the sugar and fat content of chocolate bars was reduced.

Dr Franco added: "The advice if you don't eat chocolate is not to start eating chocolate."

For those who did eat chocolate, he recommended that they should "avoid binge-eating" and eat "small amounts [of chocolate] on a regular basis".

Victoria Taylor, senior heart health dietician at the British Heart Foundation, said: "Evidence does suggest chocolate might have some heart health benefits but we need to find out why that might be.

"We can't start advising people to eat lots of chocolate based on this research.

"It didn't explore what it is about chocolate that could help and if one particular type of chocolate is better than another.

"If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than at the bottom of a box of chocolates."

DAILY MAIL (London)

August 30, 2011 Tuesday

**TWO PIECES OF** **CHOCOLATE A WEEK 'CUT** **HEART DISEASE RISK**  
**LENGTH:** 357 words

THIRD'

By Jenny Hope Medical Correspondent in Paris

EATING chocolate could cut the risk of heart disease and stroke by a third, researchers have said.

But they remain baffled as to why, and believe some of the benefits could simply stem from the 'feel-good' effect of a tasty treat.

The biggest review ever carried out into the subject found that eating at least two pieces of chocolate a week is linked to a 37 per cent drop in the chances of developing cardiovascular disease.

Those who indulged also saw a 29 per cent fall in the risk of stroke compared with those who ate fewer than two squares a week.

Dr Oscar Franco and his colleagues at Cambridge University reviewed seven studies on the effects of chocolate consumption on the heart, which involved 100,000 participants in total.

The studies included chocolate bars, drinks, biscuits and desserts, and did not differentiate between dark and milk.

The findings were presented at the European Society of Cardiology congress in Paris, and published in the British Medical Journal.

Dr Franco did not measure the exact amount that should be consumed, nor did he look at the best type, instead examining only how frequently it was eaten.

Dark chocolate is rated as more beneficial in some studies, he said, probably because it has high levels of cocoa solids.

Chocolate contains around 300 different chemicals, but attempts to isolate the most effective have so far failed.

Dr Franco said: 'Foods are complex and the different ingredients interact to produce an effect.

'We know that eating chocolate releases endorphins in the brain so it may be a matter of chocolate improving people's quality of life.'

But he added: 'We are not recommending people start eating chocolate if they don't already.

Commercially available chocolate is high in calories, and sitting down and eating all you can in one go isn't good for you.'

Victoria Taylor, of the British Heart Foundation, said: 'Evidence does suggest chocolate might have some heart health benefits but we need to find out why.

'If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than at the bottom of a box of chocolates.'

i-Independent Print Ltd

August 30, 2011   
First Edition

**Chocoholics 'at less risk of heart disease';**HEALTH  
  
**BYLINE:** Jane Kirby  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 10  
  
**LENGTH:** 258 words

Chocolate-lovers could be cutting their risk of diabetes, stroke and heart disease, research suggests.

Previous studies have found that chocolate, particularly of the dark variety, contains compounds which may reduce the inflammation that leads to heart disease.

The sweet treat is also hailed as having antioxidant properties.

In the latest research, published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), experts from the University of Cambridge reviewed seven studies on the issue.

Five reported a positive link between higher levels of chocolate consumption and lower risks of several diseases.

People who ate the most chocolate had a 37 per cent reduced risk of heart disease and a 29 per cent reduction in stroke risk, compared with those eating the least.

One of the studies also found a 31 per cent lower risk of diabetes for chocolate-lovers.

The research, which covered more than 100,000 people, included milk, dark and white chocolate and examined consumption of chocolate bars, drinks, biscuits and desserts.

However, the authors warned that the results should be interpreted with caution, because chocolate is so calorific it can cause weight gain.

Libby Dowling, from Diabetes UK, said: "On no account should people take away the message that chocolate can reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes."

From Victoria Taylor, of the British Heart Foundation: "We can't start advising people to eat lots of chocolate...

If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than at the bottom of a box of chocolates."

Metro (UK)

August 30, 2011 Tuesday   
Edition 1;   
Ireland

**Chocolate 'could cut risk of strokes'**  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 7  
  
**LENGTH:** 93 words

chocolAte-lovers may be cutting their risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke, research suggests.

Previous studies have found chocolate contains compounds which may reduce heart disease.

research published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) found a positive link between higher levels of chocolate consumption and lower risks of several diseases.

But university of cambridge researchers warned eating too much of the treat can also cause weight gain.

And a diabetes charity said weight gain outweighs any health benefits associated from eating chocolate.

**REUTERS**

**Is chocolate good for your heart? It depends**



By Ben Hirschler

PARIS | Mon Aug 29, 2011 9:14am BST

Chocolate may be good for the heart but cardiologists are not giving you a license to indulge.

New research presented at Europe's biggest medical meeting Monday suggested chocolate consumption might be associated with a one third reduction in the risk of developing heart disease.

Just why there should be such a link was unclear, the European Society of Cardiology congress was told.

There has been a string of scientific studies in recent years showing a potential health benefit from eating chocolate.

Dark chocolate, in particular, contains compounds called flavanols thought to be good for the blood system.

In an attempt to paint a clearer picture, Oscar Franco and colleagues from the University of Cambridge pooled results from seven studies involving 100,000 people.

Five of the studies showed a beneficial link between eating chocolate and cardiovascular health, while two did not.

Overall, the findings showed the highest levels of chocolate consumption were associated with a 37 percent reduction in cardiovascular disease and a 29 percent reduction in stroke compared with the lowest levels.

Franco said there were limitations with the pooled analysis, which did not differentiate between dark and milk chocolate, and more research was needed to test whether chocolate actually caused better health outcomes or if it was due to some other confounding factor.

"Evidence does suggest chocolate might have some heart health benefits but we need to find out why that might be," said Victoria Taylor, of the British Heart Foundation, who was not involved in the research.

"If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than at the bottom of a box of chocolates."

Franco, whose findings were also published online in the British Medical Journal, said while it seemed chocolate had heart benefits, these could easily be outweighed by the unhealthy nature of much confectionery.

"The high sugar and fat content of commercially available chocolate should be considered, and initiatives to reduce it might permit an improved exposure to the beneficial effect of chocolate," the research team wrote.

telegraph.co.uk

August 29, 2011 Monday 2:04 PM GMT

**Chocolate 'cuts heart risk by a third';   
Eating chocolate regularly could cut the risk of heart disease by a third, according to the largest analysis of its kind to date.**  
**BYLINE:** By Stephen Adams Medical Correspondent, in Paris  
  
**LENGTH:** 448 words

Those who eat more chocolate have a 37 per cent lower risk of cardiovascular disease than those who eat little, according to a Cambridge University analysis of seven separate studies, containing in total over 100,000 people.

They also have a 29 per cent lower chance of stroke, although they do not have a lower risk of heart failure.

The studies, which followed people in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the US and Japan for about a decade on average, did not focus on dark chocolate alone, which is believed to be the most beneficial type.

Rather, they included consumption of other types including milk chocolate and chocolate bars, drinks, biscuits and desserts.

Dr Oscar Franco, from the university's Cardiovascular Epidemiology Unit, said no one really understood why chocolate appeared to be so good for heart health.

He said: "Foods are very complex structures where many substances interact to have a beneficial effect."

One theory is that chocolate contains large amounts of antioxidants, some of which can help keep the arteries clean.

It could also help people to relax and enjoy life more, he thought.

"Chocolate could be contributing to better quality of life, and that could be one of the mechanisms, but that's just speculation," he said.

There was also some evidence that it stimulated the release of endorphins, neurotransmitters that give people a feeling of wellbeing.

Dr Franco presented the results at the annual meeting of the European Society of Cardiology in Paris on Monday, while a paper has also been published in the British Medical Journal.

He cautioned that the study did not give people carte blanche to gorge on chocolate - be that dark, milk or white.

He said it only suggested two pieces of chocolate a day; while other studies have indicated a mere 20 to 50g - a small bar's worth - is enough.

"Eat it in a moderate way," he advised.

"Over-indulgence should be avoided."

And while the analysis did not differentiate between different types of chocolate, he said it was clear that dark chocolate was the healthier option, as it contained less sugar and fat.

Health campaigners are worried this type of research sends out the wrong message, and people become confused about what is and is not healthy food.

Victoria Taylor, a senior dietitian at the British Heart Foundation, said: "We can't start advising people to eat lots of chocolate based on this research.

"If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than at the bottom of a box of chocolates."

But Dr Franco was unapologetic about his research.

"You should not keep from doing something that could bring a benefit, just because you are concerned about headlines," he said.

The Express

August 29, 2011 Monday   
U.K. 1st Edition

**Daily dose of chocolate 'cuts heart disease risk by a third'**  
**BYLINE:** By Jo Willey Health Correspondent  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; 24  
  
**LENGTH:** 385 words

A DAILY dose of chocolate could slash the risk of developing heart disease by a third, according to research.

Scientists have known for some time that a small amount of cocoarich dark chocolate can be good for you because of its high antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

But now a review of seven previous studies suggests the benefits may be more widespread.

It found that a high level of choc olate consumption was assoc iated with an average 33 per cent reduction in someone's risk of developing heart disease.

Researchers analysed the studies of more than 100,000 participants with and without existing heart disease.

For each study, they compared the group with the highest chocolate consumption against the group with the lowest consumption.

Five studies reported a beneficial link between higher levels of chocolate consumption and the risk of cardiovascular problems.

They found that the "highest levels of chocolate consumption were associated with a 37 per cent reduction in cardiovascular disease and a 29 per cent reduction in stroke compared with lowest levels".

No significant reduction was found in relation to heart failure.

The studies did not differentiate between dark or milk chocolate and included consumption of chocolate bars, drinks, biscuits and desserts.

The authors say the findings need to be interpreted with caution, in particular because chocolate is very high in calories and eating too much of it could lead to weight gain and an increased risk of diabetes.

Researcher Dr Oscar Franco, from the University of Cambridge, said just how eating chocolate affects your heart remains unclear.

He said further studies were needed to test if chocolate causes the reduction or if it can be explained by some other factor.

His findings, published online in the British Medical Journal, will be presented today at the European Society of Cardiology Congress in Paris.

Victoria Taylor, senior heart health dietitian at the British Heart Foundation, warned: "We can't start advisin g people to eat lots of chocolate based on this research.

It didn't explore what it is about chocolate that could help and if one particular type o f chocolate is better than another.

"If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than at the bottom of a box of chocolates."

The Guardian (London) - Final Edition

August 30, 2011 Tuesday

**We should cocoa: study finds in chocolate's favour**  
**BYLINE:** Sarah Boseley Health editor  
  
**SECTION:** GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 15  
  
**LENGTH:** 502 words

Chocolate may be good for the heart, scientists have said, following a large study which found that those who eat more of it are less likely to suffer heart disease and strokes.

Why chocolate lovers should be better off than those who shun it is not clear.

It contains antioxidant flavonoids, known to be protective, but also sugar and - especially in the forms popular in the UK - milk powder, which are implicated in weight gain.

Obesity is a well-established cause of serious heart problems.

Dieticians suggested that eating chocolate might be helpful because people find it relaxing.

The study was presented at the European Society of Cardiology meeting in Paris and was published online by the British Medical Journal.

It was undertaken by Dr Oscar Franco and colleagues from Cambridge University, who wanted to try to establish whether a long-speculated association between eating chocolate and reduced risk of heart disease was real.

The scientists carried out a review of all the relevant and most convincing evidence they could find - seven studies involving more than 100,000 people.

They compared the rates of heart disease in those who ate most chocolate with those who ate least.

Five of the seven studies found chocolate - eaten in a variety of forms, from sweet bars to chocolate biscuits and drinking cocoa - to be protective.

They concluded that the "highest levels of chocolate consumption were associated with a 37% reduction in stroke compared with lowest levels".

The studies did not differentiate between dark, milk and white chocolate.

They also found no effect on heart failure.

The authors are cautious about the results, warning that chocolate is high in calories - around 500 for every 100 grams - which can cause people to put on weight and lead to heart disease.

But they think the possible benefits should be further explored, including ways to reduce the fat and sugar content of chocolate.

"This paper doesn't really say eat chocolate to improve heart health.

Nor do the authors conclude this either.

What they seem to say is, those who don't deny themselves a sweet treat of chocolate - white or brown - have better cardiovascular outcomes," said Catherine Collins, a dietician at St George's Healthcare NHS Trust.

"I do feel that the perceived relaxing effect of chocolate . . . (is) perhaps akin to modest alcohol consumption - a relaxing treat, perceived as a 'de-stressor' and a food whose cost base is so low it's affordable by virtually all."

In the UK, she said, any benefit must be almost entirely due to this relaxation effect, because the cocoa content in products sold here is much lower than in continental chocolate and many people eat it in the shape of chocolate-covered sweet bars, which have very little flavonoid content.

The Scotsman

August 30, 2011, Tuesday   
1 Edition

**Chocolate every day can reduce risk of heart disease - but just a little bite**  
**BYLINE:** Lyndsay Buckland Health Correspondent  
  
**SECTION:** Pg. 15  
  
**LENGTH:** 543 words

A DAILY dose of chocolate could help reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and even diabetes, new research suggests.

Previous studies have found that chocolate - particularly of the dark variety - contains compounds which may reduce the inflammation that leads to heart disease.

Now researchers have combined the results of numerous studies to show that chocolate consumption could help reduce the risk of heart disease by almost 40 per cent.

But researchers and health campaigners warned that only small amounts of chocolate were required to have this effect - as little as one square a day - and it should not be seen as an excuse to gorge on unhealthy foods.

In the latest research, published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), experts from the University of Cambridge reviewed seven studies on chocolate consumption and links to reduced health risks.

Five of the studies reported a positive link between higher levels of chocolate consumption and lower risks of several diseases.

Overall, people who ate the most chocolate had a 37 per cent reduced risk of heart disease and a 29 per cent reduction in stroke compared with those eating the least.

One of the studies also found a 31 per cent lower risk of diabetes among chocolate-lovers.

But none found a significant reduction in heart failure.

The research, which covered more than 100,000 people, included milk, dark and white chocolate and examined consumption of chocolate bars, drinks, biscuits and desserts.

But none of the studies differentiated between the different types of chocolate to show which might be most effective at reducing risk.

The definition of high consumption was generally regarded as eating chocolate more than once a week or around 7.5g daily - one small square.

However, the authors warned that the results should be interpreted with caution, particularly since commercially available chocolate contains around 500 calories in every 100 grams.

While the health benefits of eating chocolate mean more could be done to reduce its fat and sugar content, further studies are needed, the experts said.

The researchers said: "Although over-consumption can have harmful effects, the existing studies generally agree on a potential beneficial association of chocolate consumption with a lower risk of cardiometabolic disorders."

Victoria Taylor, from the British Heart Foundation, said: "Evidence does suggest chocolate might have some heart health benefits but we need to find out why that might be.

"We can't start advising people to eat lots of chocolate based on this research.

"It didn't explore what it is about chocolate that could help and if one particular type of chocolate is better than another.

"If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than at the bottom of a box of chocolates.

"You can still eat chocolate as part of a balanced diet but moderation is key."

Libby Dowling, from Diabetes UK, said: "On no account should people take away the message from this study that eating chocolate can reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease, which can also be a complication of diabetes.

Chocolate is high in fat and sugar, which adds to weight gain, so this would outweigh any health benefits associated with eating it."

The Sun (England)

August 30, 2011 Tuesday   
Edition 1;   
Ireland

**CHOCS REDUCE HEART ATTACK RISK BY 1/3**  
**BYLINE:** AOIFE BANNON  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 16  
  
**LENGTH:** 187 words

MUNCHING chocolate can cut a person's risk of heart disease by a third, it's claimed.

The tasty treat reduces the inflammation that leads to the condition, scientists believe.

Researchers looked at seven different studies on the issue and found five supported the health benefits of munching on the snack.

These also indicated that chocolate can reduce the likelihood of stroke and diabetes.

People who ate around 7.5g of it per day were found to have a 37 per cent reduced risk of heart disease and a 29 per cent reduction in stroke compared with those eating very little chocolate.

One of the studies also found a 31 per cent lower risk of diabetes among chocoholics.

No significant reduction in heart failure risk was found.

The research, published in the British Medical Journal, covered more than 100,000 people .

The authors, from Cambridge University, concluded: "Levels of chocolate consumption seem to be associated with a substantial reduction in the risk of cardiometabolic disorders."

Around 10,000 people die here each year from cardiovascular disease while another 10,000 suffer from strokes.

The Times (London)

August 30, 2011 Tuesday   
Edition 1;   
National Edition

**Chocaholics can dine out on heart attack good news**  
  
**BYLINE:** Chris Smyth  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 14  
  
**LENGTH:** 139 words

Cambridge Chocolate seems to cut the risk of heart disease and stroke, an overview of research has found (Chris Smyth writes).

People who ate the most chocolate had a 37 per cent reduced risk of heart disease and 29 per cent reduction in stroke risk compared with those who ate least, according to an analysis of data from more than 100,000 individuals.

Researchers at the University of Cambridge looked at seven studies of the topic, finding that five linked high chocolate consumption with lower risk of heart disease, they report in the British Medical Journal.

Victoria Taylor, from the British Heart Foundation, said: "Evidence does suggest chocolate might have some heart health benefits."

But she added: "If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than at the bottom of a box of chocolates."