

## 10 Reasons to Eat More Chocolate

by [LAUREL](#) - September 27, 2007

You might think chocolate is sinful, but it's a lot better for you than you think.

In fact, it has been used for hundreds of years by medical professionals to cure ailments such as tuberculosis, gout, fatigue, diarrhoea, weak digestion, hemorrhoids, low virility and shortness of breath.

Recent nutritional research has identified many health benefits of chocolate. After reviewing these studies, [I came up with](#) the following ten reasons why you need to consume more chocolate:

1. **Reduces high blood pressure:**

Flavonoids in cocoa (procyanids) help balance blood pressure and reduce blood clotting. Researchers from Germany's University Hospital of Cologne found that cocoa consumption lowered blood pressure by an average of 4.7/2.8 mm Hg. The New York Times reported that dark chocolate is almost as effective at lowering blood pressure as common antihypertensive drugs.

2. **Improves blood flow to brain:**

A University of Nottingham professor found that drinking cocoa drinks rich in flavanols improves blood flow to key areas of the brain for two to three hours. Flavanols in the cocoa drink are a key ingredient of dark chocolate. Professor Macdonald's study also suggested that cocoa flavanols in chocolate may enhance brain function to help fight sleep deprivation, fatigue, and the effects of ageing.

3. **Boosts mood:**

MSNBC reported that caffeine and other chemicals in dark chocolate can improve your mood and ease premenstrual symptoms. Mark's Daily Apple wrote that the chemical phenylethylamine in chocolate has been found to trigger feelings similar to 'falling in love.'

4. **Prevents cell damage and**

5. **Improves blood sugar levels:**

Lisa C. Cohn, R.D., President of the Park Avenue Nutrition Spa in NYC, wrote that flavonoids in pure dark chocolate are responsible for these added benefits. Cohn said 'if you're going to indulge on Feb 14 or any other day, go for the purest dark chocolate you can find. That's the kind loaded with flavonoids.'

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6. **Reduces risk of heart attack:**

A researcher from the John Hopkins University School of medicine said that eating a few squares of dark chocolate every day may reduce your risk of dying from a heart attack by almost 50%. The study found that blood platelets clotted slower in people who eat chocolate.

7. **Helps ease chronic fatigue syndrome:**

A study found that adults with chronic fatigue syndrome who eat 1.5 ounces of 85% cocoa dark chocolate were less fatigued after they ate chocolate.

8. **Raises HDL cholesterol and lowers LDL cholesterol:**

A Penn State study found that diets high in cocoa powder and dark chocolate (with high flavonoid content) are related to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels when compared with diets low in flavonoids such as tea, wine, coffee and onions.

9. **Improves processing of blood sugar:**

An Italian study found that dark chocolate consumption increased the body's metabolism of blood sugars and may reduce the risk of diabetes.

10. **Eases a persistent cough:**

A UK study found that theobromine, a component in cocoa, may be more effective as a cough medicine than standard drug treatments. The research showed that 'theobromine acts on the sensory nerve endings of the vagus nerve, which runs through the airways in the lungs to the brain.'

Many chocolates can be high in calories, sugar and saturated fat. To maximise the health benefits of chocolate, avoid eating processed chocolate products that have refined sugar and milk fat. Instead, choose the purest dark chocolate you can find - the more raw and unprocessed, the higher the flavonoid content. The best dark chocolate to eat has at least 60% cocoa solids.

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