



Health Benefits of Chocolate

Chocolate is a simple, delicious treat, but did you know that certain types of chocolate can have a variety of health benefits? According to [Healthline](#), dark chocolate offers some health benefits including:

- Potential improvements to blood pressure because of the flavonoids, which stimulate the production of nitric oxide which sends signals to the arteries to relax, which can reduce blood pressure.
- Source of antioxidants-Dark chocolate contains ample amounts of antioxidants which helps lower “bad” cholesterol levels, prevent cell damage, and boost brain health.
- Skin protection-“bioactive compounds” in dark chocolate may help your skin. A 2021 study notes that the flavanols in dark chocolate potentially protect skin against the sun, improve blood flow to the skin, and increase hydration and skin density.

According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), one study noted that out of 55,000 people, those who ate chocolate were less likely to develop atrial fibrillation, or an “irregular heart rhythm”. The Mayo Clinic notes that another study indicated consuming chocolate potentially lowered the risk of experiencing a heart attack.

It is important to note that the more cocoa contained in the chocolate, the higher percentage of flavanols. The Mayo Clinic specifies that the chocolate most readily available, such as the kind

sold at the grocery store, may not add many health benefits at all. Many mainstream chocolate brands add other ingredients to their chocolate, such as sugar and saturated fat. These ingredients “dramatically dilute the cocoa content”, thus minimizing the health benefits. For the most benefits, the Mayo Clinic suggests the following:

- Stick to dark chocolate with higher percentage of cocoa.
- Consume other flavanol-rich foods, such as fruits and vegetables.
- Keep portions in check. Make sure, like any food, consume in moderation!

Regarding portion control, **Hopkins Medicine** notes that having a healthy relationship with chocolate is key. If you are craving a little bit of chocolate, that it is entirely normal. Larger cravings could lead to an unhealthy relationship with chocolate, and other issues. With all foods, especially sweets like chocolate, eating in moderation is the best approach. And be sure to seek a dietitian or doctor's opinion specific to your own health requirements and eating practices.