



For immediate release

Ah, The Good Health of Chocolate...Smile, it's Good for You (in Moderation!)

Talk to a chocolate lover and they'll tell you how good chocolate makes them feel. It does away with the blues, provides energy, and produces a feeling of well-being.

Maybe that's why so many people have a chocolate stash in a desk drawer at work, give in to their craving at the corner store, or create a chocolate fondue for a memorable evening. Now researchers have found the scientific basis for these mood-enhancing claims, and have also discovered other ways chocolate is good for you, in moderation.

One of chocolate's components is phenylethylamine (PEA) a natural substance found in the human body. This compound "has been shown to relieve depression in 60% of depressed patients" and low levels of PEA "may be the cause of a common form of depressive illness", write scientists in the *Journal of Neuropsychiatry*. This chocolate ingredient "produces sustained relief of depression in a significant number of patients, including some unresponsive to the standard treatments."

But before you throw away that Prozac or Zoloft, you might wonder if those famous chocolate cravings be addictive. Can we get hooked on chocolate? Not according to researchers, who say it "improves mood...but does not produce tolerance." In other words, you will not need more chocolate the next time to get the same energy and elevated mood.

Chocolate helps our health in other ways too. It's a good source of magnesium, a trace mineral often deficient in Western diets. Magnesium can alleviate premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and depression, supports cardiovascular health, assists in maintaining lower blood pressure, and helps prevent premature labour and convulsions in pregnant women.

"Our findings show that the habitual use of the cocoa product as a dietary supplement favors correction of the negative effects of long-term feeding with a diet moderately deficient in magnesium," say researchers at the University of Grenada in a study published in the *International Journal of Vitamin and Nutritional Research*.

But all chocolate is not created equal. According to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, dark chocolate contains plant substances called polyphenols, some of the same ingredients responsible for the heart-healthy attributes of red wine. Polyphenols have been shown to lower blood pressure in animals. The darker the chocolate, the more polyphenols it contains. Dr. Dirk Taubert of the University of Cologne says dark chocolate "might serve as a promising approach to reduce systolic blood pressure."

That's good health news, and might help explain why more North Americans seem to be switching to dark chocolate, which typically has more cocoa, less sugar, and a stronger flavour. Maybe dark chocolate lovers have known all along what the rest of us are just learning. Chocolate is good for you (in moderation).

Experience dark, milk and white chocolate tastings, demonstrations and much more at the 4th annual West Coast Chocolate Festival, October 15-22 in Coquitlam, Port Moody and Port Coquitlam. For event information and tickets, go to www.chocolatefestival.ca.

Sources

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