

A monthly insight into Nutrition

## CHOCOLATE-NOT A GUILTY PLEASURE!

We've all heard the old saying that Chocolate is sinfully delicious, but healthy too! Today, chocolate is used to satisfy a sweet tooth more than anything else. Recent research about the health benefits of chocolate may encourage you to delve into the world of chocolate a little more. The findings suggest that the consumption of chocolate may help prevent high blood pressure, improve heart health, and provide numerous antioxidants. In addition studies have found chocolate may improve mood by boosting the brain chemical serotonin.

When shopping for chocolate, label reading is essential; because all chocolate is not created equal, and not all types of chocolate offer these health benefits. To get the health benefits of chocolate, choose dark varieties. The compounds that benefit your health (antioxidants and phenols) are in the cocoa solids.

### What are flavonoids?

Flavonoids are naturally-occurring compounds found in plant-based foods recognized as exuding certain health benefits.

Flavonoids are found in a wide array of foods and beverages, such as cranberries, apples, peanuts, chocolate, onions, tea and red wine. There are more than 4,000 flavonoid compounds; flavonoids are a subgroup of a large class called polyphenols.

The more cocoa solids your chocolate has, the darker the chocolate will appear. But you can't rely on looks or marketing alone since any chocolate can be labeled "dark," even if it doesn't contain a high concentration of cocoa. The first ingredient on the label should be cocoa, chocolate, or cocoa liquor. Choose a product that contains at least 70 percent cocoa. This percentage should be listed on the label.

Enjoy this not so guilty pleasure in moderation.



### NUTRITION TIP

Studies have shown that consuming a small bar of dark chocolate everyday can reduce blood pressure in individuals with high blood pressure.

Source: Journal of the American Medical Association