

FOR THE LOVE OF CHOCOLATE

How Sweet it is!!

CHOCOLATE HAS MANY BENEFITS:

Though not all chocolate is created equally.

- ❖ White chocolate has no cocoa powder in it at all. Only cocoa butter, in addition to multiple milk substances and sugar; which provides essentially none of the benefits that good quality chocolate boasts.
- ❖ Milk chocolate contains as little as 10% cocoa powder – with the rest of its ingredients being butterfat, milk powder and sugar - among other things.
- ❖ Then you have semi-sweet and dark chocolate; which contains as little as 35% cocoa, and as much as 90 - 95% cocoa.
- ❖ Lastly you have whole 100% cocoa (or Cacao, if it's raw) in the form of cocoa powder.

GOOD QUALITY, DARK CHOCOLATE IMPROVES HEART HEALTH:

According to research from the Cleveland Clinic: The flavanols found in dark chocolate have a beneficial effect on our heart and circulatory health.

These dark chocolate flavanols help lower blood pressure; promote more effective blood flow to the heart and brain; and even reduce the risk of blood clots and stroke by actually making our blood platelets less sticky and prone to clot!

The *International Journal of Cardiology* released a study featuring two test groups: One group consumed flavonoid rich dark chocolate for two weeks, and the other group consumed flavonoid void white chocolate for two weeks.

The dark chocolate group showed significant improvement in their heart circulation; whereas the white chocolate group experienced no positive health effects.



DARK CHOCOLATE IS AN ANTIOXIDANT RICH SUPERFOOD:

Dark chocolate supplies an abundant source of antioxidants. Among which are polyphenols – polyphenols are protective chemicals that are found in healthy plant foods/drinks; including green tea and red wine.

These polyphenols reduce the cellular and arterial damage brought on by oxidative stress reactions.

Thus promoting healthier and more youthful cells and arteries!

Studies have also shown that by consuming dark chocolate regularly, you may reduce your LDL cholesterol by as much as 10%!

And by consuming raw cacao powder, you will experience all of these benefits at their fullest potential!

ORAC Values* of Top Antioxidant Foods per 100 grams

	Unprocessed Cocoa Powder	26,000
	Açaí Berry	18,500†
	Dark Chocolate	13,120
	Prunes	5,770
	Rasins	2,830
	Blueberries	2,400
	Blackberries	2,036
	Strawberries	1,540
	Spinach, Raw	1,260
	Broccoli Florets	890
	Red Grapes	739
	Cherries	670

*Source: U.S. Dept of Agriculture & the Journal of the American Chemical Society.

†Source: Brunswick Laboratories

YOUR BRAIN ON CHOCOLATE:

Dark chocolate can actually boost your brain's serotonin levels - as well as improve your cognitive function.

Serotonin is thought to regulate mood, happiness and anxiety. In other words; it helps keep your mood stable.

Dark chocolate also contains a substance called anandamide (which is derived from the Sanskrit word, 'Ananda', meaning "peaceful bliss"). This compound produces feelings of exhilaration and elation.

Included among these benefits; dark chocolate also contains a substance called Phenethylamine.

This promotes the release of pleasurable endorphins and even dopamine. (Fun fact: your brain releases phenethylamine when you become infatuated or 'fall in love'!)



THE BEST CHOCOLATE:

The best chocolate would be the chocolate with the most benefits; so the minimally processed, organic cacao powder (or cacao nibs if you're the adventurous type!) will be your healthiest choice.

You can mix a teaspoon of this raw cacao powder with a small cup of warmed coconut milk and a drizzle of honey for a dark chocolate treat with a powerhouse of benefits.

Or if the powder is too dark for you... Go for the organic, fair-trade (70% cocoa and above), dark chocolate bars. Then you can enjoy a piece or two of these from time to time without guilt!



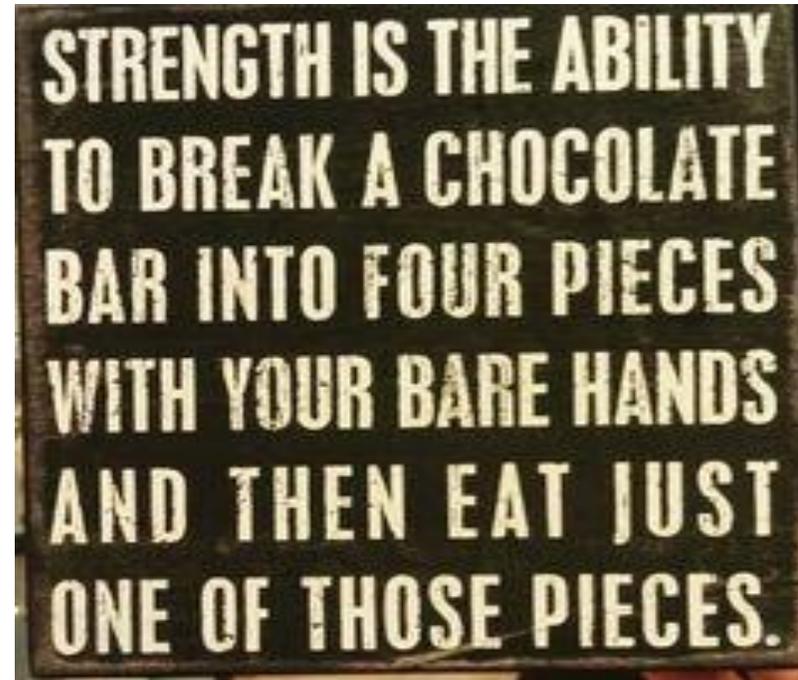
THE CHOCOLATEY CONCLUSION:

You may be wondering, “So how much chocolate do I have to eat to experience these benefits?”

Well, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, adding only half an ounce of dark chocolate to an average American diet is enough to increase total antioxidant capacity 4% and lessen oxidation of LDL cholesterol.

So it doesn't take much to experience all of the wonderful benefits of this most delicious substance!! – Just remember to limit yourself to a reasonable portion, and to resist eating the whole bar for “the sake of health and sanity”!!

Enjoy!



Healing Hands
Health Center