

health awareness



A COUNTY HEALTH POOL PUBLICATION

APRIL 2015



HEALTH BENEFITS FROM DARK CHOCOLATE

You may already know that dark chocolate is good for you, in particular for your heart. More than 300 scientific studies have established the power of dark chocolate to prevent and reverse heart disease. Dark chocolate is uniquely rich in *cocoa flavanols*—powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds such as *epicatechin* that are a nutritional tonic for arteries. Green tea, red wine, grapes, coffee and apples also are rich sources of flavanols—but ounce for ounce, dark chocolate contains more than any other food.

The regular intake of cocoa flavanols and other bioactive compounds in dark chocolate can douse artery-damaging inflammation, decrease the amount of calcified plaque that clogs arteries, reduce high

blood pressure, boost good HDL cholesterol and reduce bad LDL cholesterol, help prevent heart attacks, strokes and heart failure, and even cut the risk of dying from heart disease in *half*.

Intrigued by the cardio protective power of cocoa flavanols, scientists around the world have been investigating the healing potential of dark chocolate for a wide range of other conditions—and discovered it can fight these chronic health problems.

Memory Loss and Dementia

Decreased blood flow to the brain is a well-known risk factor for dementia.

Good News: Consuming dark chocolate *boosts* blood flow to the brain, supplying brain cells (*neurons*) with more oxygen and glucose. And those well

nourished neurons also perform better.

Studies show that ingesting flavanol-rich dark chocolate improves “working memory” (short-term memory used to process information) and attentiveness and decreases mental fatigue.

Recent Developments: In a study from Harvard Medical School, one month of consuming dark chocolate improved brain blood flow and mental performance in older people (average age 73) who had poor blood flow to the brain and structural damage to the white matter of the brain, which relays messages between neurons.

Aging Skin and Skin Cancer

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There is now so much research on the link between cocoa flavanols and protection from skin aging that an international team of scientists—including the dermatology service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City—summarized it in a recent paper published in *Nutrients*.

One study in the paper found that ingesting dark chocolate for 12 weeks protected the skin from UV radiation (sunlight) and resulted in 25% less reddening. Dark chocolate also increased the flow of blood and oxygen to the skin, improving the appearance of the skin.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

In this condition—suffered by more than one million Americans—you have severe, unrelenting fatigue, particularly after physical or mental exertion. Chronic fatigue syndrome often is accompanied by symptoms such as insomnia, poor concentration, depression and muscle pain.

Startling Finding: In a study published in *Nutrition Journal*, 10 middle-aged people with chronic fatigue syndrome ate high-flavanol dark chocolate for eight weeks. The participants experienced 35% less fatigue and were less depressed and anxious. But when they ate a low-flavanol placebo chocolate bar everyday for eight weeks, their fatigue and other symptoms quickly returned.

Which Chocolate is Best?

BENEFITS CORNER

Websites

As an ASO (Administrative Services Only) Member with Anthem, CHP Members have access to utilizing the Anthem Website. Some of the tools and resources available at www.anthem.com

- Locate a doctor within the network
- Check claims status and view deductible and OOP Maximums for current policy year
- Find Urgent Care Center
- Estimate your cost for a procedure or treatment
- Health and Wellness discounts for various programs

There are also many tools available on the CTSI website at www.ctsi.org

- FAQs
- Medical, Dental and Vision Benefit Summaries
- Medical, Dental and Vision Plan Documents
- Claim Forms(Flu Shots, CDL Physicals, Health Fair, Medical, Dental, and Rx Reimbursement Claim Forms)

Your CHP Benefits Administrator will be providing training on how to navigate both of these websites in the 2015 CHP Educational Training/Open Enrollment Meetings. Check with your entity for the date and time they will be in your location. You may also contact the CHP staff at 303-861-0507 for assistance.

In order to experience the therapeutic effect from the cocoa flavanols, it is recommended that a daily dose of 400 milligrams(mg) of cocoa flavanols—the amount used in many of the studies. **Important:** Higher doses do not produce better results.

And the healthiest way to get those flavanols is with unsweetened *cocoa powder* that delivers

all the flavanols of dark chocolate without burdening your daily diet with extra calories and sugar. Using cocoa powder also helps you control your intake—its notoriously easy to consume an entire three-ounce bar of chocolate even though your optimal daily “dose” is only one ounce.

– *From bottomlinepersonal.com*