

Chocolate Improves Baby Boomer Blood Flow

by Dr Joseph Mercola, www.mercola.com



The flavanols in cocoa could offer significant cardiovascular benefits for men and women over 50.

A new study has determined that drinking a flavanol-rich cocoa drink improved blood vessel function, especially for older study participants.

For the current study, which was partially supported by a grant from Mars Incorporated, 15 adults under age 50 and 19 adults over age 50 drank the specially-made beverage daily for four to six days. Researchers then tracked changes in the function of their arteries. There was significant improvement in vessel function for all study participants, but the older men and women showed more pronounced improvement. This could be an indication that chocolate may be a very useful dietary approach to improving endothelial

There are numerous studies demonstrating that cocoa flavanols improve blood circulation and reduce the tendency to form damaging clots. However, an editorial accompanying the current study cautioned that not all chocolate contains high quantities of cocoa flavanols.

They warned that, "The flavanol-rich cocoa products used in experimental studies ... should not be confused with a number of commercially available snacks that contain many calories but are low in natural cocoa and flavanols." *Journal of Hypertension August 2006; 24 (8):1575-1580*

I've recently become convinced chocolate -- chock full of polyphenolic bioflavanoids -- can be a powerful health food. A growing number of studies have indicated the health benefits of eating minimally processed dark chocolate. That said, please be cautious about all the hype being generated about it by candy companies like Mars. This study was funded partly from a Mars grant, so runs a strong risk of being biased. It's important to keep in mind that you can derive a majority of the benefits of flavanoids by consuming fruits like blueberries, apples and grapes, and most all vegetables, including broccoli, greens and onions.

This is obviously a method I would prefer most people utilize. Also remember, as the editorial that accompanied the study wisely warned, not any chocolate will do, as a recent study about alarmingly high lead levels underscored.

If you want to eat chocolate and get its benefits, I urge you to follow some simple guidelines to keep your eating habits safe and healthy:

- If you eat chocolate, only eat DARK chocolate. Dark chocolate has antioxidant properties and is far better than milk chocolate, as adding milk cancels out the chocolate's antioxidant effects. However, even if chocolate is dark, that does not necessarily mean it is healthy; most chocolate, dark or milk, is processed in ways that destroy the majority of the beneficial polyphenolic bioflavanoids.
- Only eat chocolate if you're healthy. Chocolate, even if it is dark, still contains large quantities of sugar, and eating sugar is a profoundly negative influence on your immune system. It should be avoided if you are sick.
- Consume chocolate in moderation. If you are constantly craving sweets, you are likely not eating the correct balance of protein, fats and carbohydrates for your metabolic type. If you tend to crave chocolate when you are upset, bored or lonely, then you could benefit from resolving these underlying emotional issues that are driving you to seek comfort from chocolate.

For further information on how to build the right nutritional plan for you please contact:

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