



# nutrinews

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Q:

**Valentine's Day is near... is chocolate good for you?**

A:

Recent research indicates that dark chocolate is a great source of antioxidants. Antioxidants are the substances that help to slow down the aging process and help to prevent heart disease and certain kinds of cancer. The antioxidants in chocolate are polyphenol flavonoids, which are also found in tea, red wine, prunes, apples, and other fruits and vegetables.

In addition, one ounce of dark sweet chocolate has 12% of the iron and 33% of the magnesium a healthy

woman needs each day, as well as other small quantities of B vitamins and other minerals.

Chocolate is also thought to be a "mood enhancer". Dark chocolate contains a number of chemicals that impact brain activity (tryptophan, anadamide, and phenylethylamine), muscle activity (theobromine), and central nervous system activity (caffeine).

Good-quality chocolate is made with cocoa butter, which contains equal parts of oleic acid, stearic acid and palmitic acid. Oleic acid is a heart-healthy monounsaturated fat. Stearic acid is a saturated fat, but acts like a

monounsaturated fat in the body and is considered neutral. Palmitic acid is a saturated fat, but is only one-third of the fat in chocolate. Lower quality chocolates will be made with unhealthy saturated fats, including butterfat (common in milk chocolate), palm oil and partially hydrogenated oils. Read the ingredient labels for the type of fats used and remember that all fats have the same amount of calories, 9 per gram of fat, regardless of the type.

There is currently no established serving of chocolate to get the proposed health benefits, and perhaps several pounds may be needed to reach euphoria. So what is the bottom line?

Include chocolate in moderation as part of a general diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nonfat dairy products and lean protein sources (sound familiar?). Balance the benefits of chocolate with the calories you want to "spend" on it.

Choose a good-quality dark chocolate, for example Dove and those from Belgium or France, and ENJOY! But don't expect chocolate to prevent heart disease, cancer or anything else. It's only part of a healthy lifestyle that includes all things in moderation: food, physical activity, joy... and even moderation!

Got a question? email: [wildcatnutrition@yahoo.com](mailto:wildcatnutrition@yahoo.com)

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