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Chocolate Provides Health Benefits

by Melanie Grimes, citizen journalist - [Email this author](#)

(NaturalNews) Studies have now proven that chocolate is good for you. It is rich in antioxidants and has many health benefits, including lowering blood sugar and cholesterol. Cocoa comes from the Theobromo cacao plant. Half of the cocoa bean is made of fat in the form of cocoa butter. Cocoa powder is the edible non-fat part of the cacao bean. Most of the fats in chocolate are saturated, but it also contains lots of the "good" fats: oleic and linoleic acids.

Cocoa has one of the highest concentration [antioxidants](#) of any foods, in the form of the flavonoids: catechin and epicatechin. ORAC scores are used to measure the level of [antioxidant](#) properties in foods. This oxygen radical absorbance capacity test rates cocoa higher than most [foods](#), including green tea or red wine.

Studies have shown that [dark chocolate](#) decreases blood pressure. This function may be attributed to cocoa's action as a renin-angiotension enzyme inhibitor, the same mechanism addressed by [blood pressure](#) medication. A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* in 2003 reported on a German study of 13 people between the ages of 5 and 64 who had [blood](#) pressure numbers of 153 over 84. The group was divided into two groups. One group ate a 100-gram bar of white [chocolate](#) daily and the other group ate a dark chocolate bar. Those who ate the dark chocolate showed lower blood pressure, but alas for white chocolate lovers, this [candy](#) bar did not show any [health benefits](#). The benefits were attributed to the [cocoa](#) phenols that are present in the dark cocoa powder from the cocoa bean. The darker the chocolate, the more [health](#) benefits.

The cocoa bean also contains insoluble [fiber](#), which helps lower cholesterol levels. The fiber in chocolate has also been shown to reduce the rate of colorectal cancer, and to reduce constipation.

Dark chocolate contains magnesium, which helps soothe the nervous system, relax muscles, reduce PMS and build teeth and bones. Dark chocolate also contains the mineral copper, which is needed in many metabolic functions in the body.

Chocolate may even slow dementia. Cocoa's content of antioxidants aids in memory, along with the nutrients vitamin E and vitamin B.

By increasing nitric oxide intake, cocoa has been shown to help stimulate insulin to uptake [blood sugar](#), thereby stopping the [insulin](#) resistance that can lead to diabetes. And cocoa has

even been shown to repair liver cells after alcohol consumption.

As an antidepressant, chocolate really shines. The "love chemical" phenylethylamine helps to raise the serotonin and dopamine levels. This curbs appetite, stimulates the nervous system, and even raises libido.

Chocolate has now proven itself to be a nutritious [food](#), as well as a tempting desert. There are many suppliers now importing fair trade, organic or raw chocolate products. Look for chocolate that has a high cocoa content. Check your local candy store for this health-giving food, disguised as a delicious treat.

<http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/...>

<http://mydrchocolate.soundconcepts....>

<http://www.webmd.com/diet/news/2003...>

About the author

Melanie Grimes is a writer, screenwriter, journal editor, and adjunct faculty member at Bastyr University. She has written an eBook on natural treatments for [the flu](#), available at her blog. A trained homeopath, she also raises alpacas and is an avid spinner. She is the editor of the homeopathic journal, Simillimum, has been a medical editor for 15 years, won awards as a screenwriter, taught creative writing, founded the first Birkenstock store in the USA (www.mjfeet.com) and authored medical textbooks.

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