

good
vibes
from your
JFK Health Team

WEEKLY NEWS & HAPPENINGS STRAIGHT FROM THE HEALTH CLINIC

warm up to improving your
health with knowledge of
the latest health news

~ Jan. Health Aide & Rose, RN



Benefits of Chocolate

1. **Increases heart health:** The antioxidants in dark chocolate have been shown to lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of clotting and increase blood circulation to the heart, thus lowering the risks of stroke, coronary heart disease and death from heart disease.
2. **Balances the immune system:** Flavonols prevent the immune system from going into overdrive and reduce oxidative stress, which is an imbalance caused by cells fighting against free radicals and a common cause of many diseases.
3. **Combats diabetes:** Epicatechin protects cells, makes them stronger and supports the processes that help the body to use insulin better, which might prevent or combat diabetes.
4. **Improves brain function:** Flavonols in dark chocolate have a positive impact on brain function, including better reaction time, visual-spatial awareness and stronger memory. Though research is ongoing, one reason for this may be that flavonols increase blood flow to the brain.
5. **Boosts athletic performance:** The epicatechin in dark chocolate increases the production of nitric oxide in the blood, which supports circulation and reduces the amount of oxygen an athlete uses while engaged in moderately intense exercise. This allows the athlete to maintain workout intensity for longer.
6. **Reduces stress:** People who ate dark chocolate reported that they felt less stressed, and researchers confirmed that after eating dark chocolate, there were reduced levels of the stress hormone cortisol. This may be related to dark chocolate's effects on heart health, since stress is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. You should always check the label to be aware of the calorie, fat and sugar content, which could potentially affect the overall health benefit.

For some people, chocolate can trigger acid reflux or migraines.

In the end, indulging in an occasional chocolate treat shouldn't be fraught with stress or guilt, whether it is antioxidant-rich dark chocolate or white chocolate, which has very little nutritional benefit. As in most healthy relationships, the key is to maintain a positive and balanced outlook.

Dark chocolate has many health benefits and can definitely be enjoyed as part of a balanced diet. There are many healthy ways to incorporate chocolate into your lifestyle, so find what works for you.