

Dark Chocolate



**A Tiny Piece Is All It Takes
for Health & Pleasure!**



Benefits of Dark Chocolate

- ♥ Chocolate contains polyphenols, which are antioxidants that can prevent cancer, prevent heart disease, enhance our immune system, and give us a feeling of well-being. Polyphenols help the body's cells resist damage from free radicals, which damage cell structure and are formed in our normal body processes. Polyphenols also help inhibit platelet aggregation and activation, meaning they help prevent platelets from clumping together, therefore reducing the risk of arteriosclerosis.
- ♥ Fruit, vegetables, red wine, and tea have polyphenolic flavonoids as well, but amazingly polyphenols are found in much higher abundance in chocolate and cocoa. It is important to note that dark chocolate contains more than twice the amount of antioxidants that milk chocolate does and has fewer calories. White chocolate contains no cocoa, and therefore holds no real potential for nutritional benefits.
- ♥ Chocolate also has a chemical in it, called theobromine, which has been shown to be effective in preventing cough. Chocolate also contains healthful nutrients, such as the minerals calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, iron, zinc, potassium, B vitamins, and copper, which are essential for normal biological functions, growth, metabolism, and oxygen transport.
- ♥ Chocolate can affect mood in several ways. It contains phenethylamine (EPA), which stimulates the nervous system, triggering the release of endorphins, opiate-like compounds that dull pain and give a sense of well-being. There are also chemicals in chocolate associated with feelings of sexual arousal and pleasure. Additionally, chocolate can also boost brain levels of serotonin, that happy neurotransmitter, especially in women who tend to be more sensitive to chocolate than men. And yet another way chocolate can make us feel good is by inhibiting the natural breakdown of anandamide, a neurotransmitter normally found in small amounts in the brain, which can produce a feeling of euphoria.



What about all of the fat in chocolate?

♥ Yes, chocolate does contain fat. But, you may be surprised to find out that the news is not as bad as once perceived. The fat in chocolate (from the cocoa butter), is comprised of equal amounts of oleic, stearic and palmitic acids. Oleic acid is the same type of monounsaturated fat found in olive oil and known to be "heart-healthy." Although, stearic and palmitic acids are both "saturated fats," linked to increasing risk for heart disease, it's only the palmitic acid in chocolate that will increase the LDL-cholesterol (the bad cholesterol), as the stearic acid appears to have a neutral effect on cholesterol, neither raising nor lowering the LDL-cholesterol levels. Therefore, only one-third of the fat in chocolate has the potential to raise cholesterol levels.

Caution: Calories still count

♥ Be cautious as to the type of dark chocolate you choose: chewy caramel-marshmallow-nut-covered dark chocolate is by no means a heart-healthy food option. What wreaks havoc on most chocolate products is the additional fat and calories added from other ingredients.

♥ It is possible to eat a small piece of chocolate at the end of a meal and stay under 100 calories. This is fewer calories than we consume from most desserts. A small piece of chocolate may actually be a good weight control strategy and may be the only "diet pill" you need. By having a small amount at the end of the meal, it can really provide a satisfying finish to that meal.

♥ Eating chocolate need not be a guilty pleasure -- moderation is the key. Relish in every moment of the experience: let the chocolate sit in your mouth for a few seconds to release its primary flavors and aromas. Then chew it a few times to release the secondary aromas. Let it rest lightly against the roof of your mouth so you experience the full range of flavors. Finally, enjoy the lingering taste in your mouth.

**Here's a Real Treat for your taste buds and your health.
ENJOY!!!**

Dark Chocolate-Covered Strawberries

6 ounces dark chocolate
3 tablespoons half and half cream
½ tablespoon unsalted butter
20 large strawberries



In a one-quart glass bowl combine chocolate and cream. Heat in microwave oven on high 1 ½ to 2 minutes, stirring occasionally, until smooth. Add butter and stir until melted. Dip each strawberry into the chocolate mixture allowing the excess chocolate to drip back into the bowl. If necessary, add additional cream to the chocolate to achieve desired coating consistency. Transfer the coated strawberry to a baking sheet lined with foil or waxed paper and repeat process. Allow the chocolate to cool and then chill the strawberries, until chocolate is set, about 20 to 30 minutes.