



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Chocolate: To Your Health!**

You're dying for a piece of chocolate. You close your eyes and can almost feel it melt in your mouth, can almost taste its sweet richness. But you promised yourself you'd eat better. So you try to ignore your craving, even though it seems to grow stronger by the minute.

Give it up. No, not the chocolate, the struggle. Go ahead and indulge, occasionally. Studies show that deprivation tends to lead to overeating. And besides, studies of chocolate consumption show that not only is there room in a healthy diet for moderate amounts of the sweet stuff, but it may be good for you. Researchers have discovered numerous benefits of chocolate in recent years. So peel the foil off a little piece of heaven and read on:

A 1.5 ounce piece of chocolate contains the same amount of the heart-protecting antioxidant phenol as a glass of red wine. Consumption of red wine has been shown to lower your risk of coronary heart disease, although there's as yet no such proof for chocolate. A Harvard study of 7,800 men indicated some preliminary data that chocolate may also lower the risk.

Catechins, antioxidants found in black tea, are believed to help boost the immune system and prevent heart disease. Dutch researchers say that dark chocolate contains four times more catechins than black tea. Chocolate contains small amounts of caffeine and larger amounts of theobromine, a similar substance. Both are xanthines that, quickly absorbed by your body, mildly stimulate your central nervous system, speed up your heart a bit and increase your alertness. Yet there's not enough stimulant to cost you any sleep. Concerns about tooth decay may be reduced because chocolate seems to contain an antibacterial agent that inhibits plaque formation.

Even the fat in chocolate isn't as bad as it could be. More than half the saturated fat is stearic acid, which doesn't raise cholesterol. Also, the fat in chocolate contains alpha-tocopherol, a form of vitamin E. Contrary to popular belief, small amounts of chocolate don't cause migraines or acne.

If you are a chocolate lover you won't be surprised that chocolate is the most craved of all foods. Some 40 percent of women and 15 percent of men report having chocolate cravings. Researchers reporting in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* believe that chocolate's appeal is a combination of its nutrients and chemical composition, as well as its fat and sugar. It doesn't hurt that chocolate melts just at or below body temperature, creating that delicious ooze when you place it on your tongue.

Chocolate cravings are real, and for many people, the craving can't be satisfied by any other food. So why fight it? There can be room for chocolate in a healthy diet. Buy a small amount of your favorite and eat it slowly, savoring every bite. And have a sweet day.

*Referenced from: Dorothy Smith, UCCE Amador, Calaveras & Tuolumne Counties; Source: Mayo Clinic Health Information 02/02*