

The Science:

Chocolate's Healthy Effect on Your Heart.

Naturopathic Doctors are *almost* ready to put CHOCOLATE on our list for TREATING & PREVENTING cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Here's Why:

The bulk of the research on CHOCOLATE and HEART HEALTH began with a group of indigenous people living off the coast of Panama, the KUNA TRIBE.

- The KUNA TRIBE has long been famous in the world of nutritionists and cardiologists who study hypertension (high blood pressure = HBP).
- Since the 1940's researchers have known that the KUNA have neither HBP nor CVD.
- In 2006 Marjorie McCallough and colleagues from Harvard University surveyed the eating habits of the KUNA people. Her research tells us that island dwelling KUNA, compared to urban Kuna, consume:
 - 10x the amount of cocoa
 - 4x the amount of fish and
 - 2x the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Urban KUNA (those who have moved to Panama City) start to show HBP and signs of CVD.
- Researchers suggested that the KUNA's high chocolate consumption made a positive impact on their cardiovascular status.
- For example: On a daily basis the KUNA people consume 2 to 3 cups of *minimally processed* cocoa that contains a high level of POLYPHENOLS.
- When consumed, the polyphenols trigger an increased production of NITROUS OXIDE.
- *This doesn't sound heart healthy, but IT IS!*
- Nitrous Oxide is a "potent vasodilator" – meaning that it help blood vessels "open up" - "relax a little" - become less constricted (by stress) and therefore allow more blood flow through the artery passage way.
- The implication of this is: LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE!

MORE STUDIES:

Several clinical studies already published suggest that chocolate lowers BP.



1) American Journal of Hypertension, March 2010

- 102 Patients with HBP were given either 6g (1/4oz) or 25g of flavanol (polyphenol) rich dark chocolate for 3 months.
- Result: Both groups had significant reduction in BP readings and there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.
- Suggestion: It does not take much chocolate to have a positive impact on BP.

2) Meta-analysis, 2010

- Chocolate decreased BP by 4.5mmHg (systolic- top number) and 2.5mmHg (diastolic-bottom number).

3) 2007 Study:

- Patients received a daily dose of chocolate providing 700mg of flavanols (polyphenol) for one month.
- Results: 6% reduction in LDL (“bad” cholesterol), 9% increase in HDL (“good” cholesterol). Also a reduced CRP (marker for CVD risk) in women.

There is only one problem with all of this chocolate research:

- The chocolate used in the clinical trials is not the chocolate you can purchase at regular stores.
- Even the “70% cocoa, organic, small farm, lovingly tended” chocolate will not do the trick.
- All commercial chocolates contain little polyphenol, as the heating process destroys them.

The Best Case Scenario:

- Research suggests a daily dose of raw chocolate = 1/4 to 1/2 oz.
- Yup! *Per day!* If it’s the right kind of chocolate you can and should consume it every day!
- Note: a small dose is all it takes to affect your heart and blood vessels in healthy ways.

Where to find RAW CHOCOLATE:

In Guelph: WOW Café (Carden Street).

- Serving a dessert called “chocolate dream cake” made with raw chocolate. *Delicious!*
- http://www.wowrawcafe.ca/cafe_menu.html

Online: SUNFOOD (www.sunfood.com).

- A company in the U.S., which ships to CANADA.
- They sell numerous raw chocolate products.
- <http://www.envirohealthtech.com/cacao.htm>
<http://www.sunfood.com/food/cacao-chocolate.html>

Bottom Line:

- Check in with your MD and your Naturopathic Doctor to be sure you know where you stand in terms of cardiovascular disease risk.
- Eat more FRESH fruits, veggies and fish.
- Find healthy ways to manage your stress, such as yoga, tai chi, exercise and meditation (click here for my article on MEDITATION AS MEDICATION).
- In addition to this list of heart healthy tips: *enjoy a little raw chocolate each day!*

A Naturopathic Doctor can help you significantly reduce your risk for CVD, promote excellent heart health and guide you toward overall body- mind wellness, using safe, effective natural therapies and lifestyle counseling.

Our heart is dedicated to making sure that yours stays good and strong now and for the long run, so that you can live your life with all the vitality and joy you can muster!

Heidi McGill is a registered doctor of naturopathic medicine. She has helped dozens of women (and men) achieve better cardiovascular function and overall wellness in body and mind, using the principles and practices of naturopathic medicine. She offers seminars and writes articles on topics that matter to you. Heidi is passionate about educating

you on how your body functions and is focused on guiding you towards optimal health, vitality and more joy in your life.

* This article was adapted from an article published in Naturopathic News and Review, October 2010.

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* *Thank you Dr. Jacob, for your great articles and genuine interest in helping our patients get well, using the most recent research available, even chocolate studies!*

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