



Why is Dark Chocolate Healthy?:

Chocolate is made from plants, which means it contains many of the health benefits of dark vegetables. These benefits are from [flavonoids](#), which act as [antioxidants](#). Antioxidants protect the body from aging caused by [free radicals](#), which can cause damage that leads to heart disease. Dark chocolate contains a large number of antioxidants (nearly 8 times the number found in strawberries). Flavonoids also help relax [blood pressure](#) through the production of [nitric oxide](#), and balance certain hormones in the body.

Heart Health Benefits of Dark Chocolate and Tips:

Dark chocolate is good for your heart. A small bar of it everyday can help keep your [heart](#) and cardiovascular system running well. Two heart health benefits of dark chocolate are:

- [Lower Blood Pressure](#): Studies have shown that consuming a small bar of dark chocolate everyday can reduce blood pressure in individuals with high blood pressure.
- [Lower Cholesterol](#): Dark chocolate has also been shown to reduce LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol) by up to 10 percent.

Chocolate Tip 1 - Balance the Calories:

This information doesn't mean that you should eat a pound of chocolate a day. Chocolate is still a high-calorie, high-fat food. Most of the studies done used no more than 100 grams, or about 3.5 ounces, of dark chocolate a day to get the benefits.

One bar of dark chocolate has around 400 calories. If you eat half a bar of chocolate a day, you must balance those 200 calories by eating less of something else. Cut out other sweets or snacks and replace them with chocolate to keep your total calories the same.

Chocolate Tip 2 - Taste the Chocolate:

Chocolate is a complex food with over 300 compounds and chemicals in each bite. To really enjoy and appreciate chocolate, take the time to taste it. Professional chocolate tasters have developed a [system for tasting chocolate](#) that include assessing the appearance, smell, feel and taste of each piece.

Chocolate Tip 3 - Go for Dark Chocolate:

Dark chocolate has far more antioxidants than milk or white chocolate. These other two chocolates cannot make any health claims. Dark chocolate has 65 percent or higher cocoa content.

Chocolate Tip 4 - Skip the Nougat:

You should look for pure dark chocolate or dark chocolate with nuts, orange peel or other flavorings. Avoid anything with caramel, nougat or other fillings. These fillings are just adding sugar and fat which erase many of the benefits you get from eating the chocolate.

Chocolate Tip 5 - Avoid Milk:

It may taste good but some [research](#) shows that washing your chocolate down with a glass of milk could prevent the antioxidants being absorbed or used by your body.

Other Benefits of Dark Chocolate:

Chocolate also holds benefits apart from protecting your heart:

- it tastes good
- it stimulates endorphin production, which gives a feeling of pleasure
- it contains serotonin, which acts as an anti-depressant
- it contains theobromine, caffeine and other substances which are stimulants

<http://longevity.about.com/od/lifelongnutrition/p/chocolate.htm>

