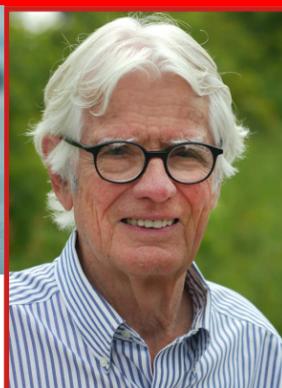


HEALTH CORNER



The Doctor Game

By W. Gifford-Jones M.D.

Darling, a Little Chocolate for a Little Amour?

Hmm, should I order flowers, maybe consider a romantic candlelight dinner, or a box of chocolates? This year, chocolate wins after reading an article from the highly respected Nutrition department at Tuft's University. So, what's good and what's questionable about chocolate on Valentine's day?

I believe readers will agree that we need a lot more love in this troubled world. The Aztec Indians thought so too. They considered chocolate an aphrodisiac. The story goes that Montezuma consumed a huge chocolate drink before visiting his harem.

Alas, this is more fiction than science. A chemical called phenylethylamine is present in chocolate and does play a small part in emotional arousal. But studies show that eating chocolate does not increase the level of this chemical in the brain.

This is not good news if you've spent your last dollar on chocolates, hoping for a tender embrace. But do not despair. All is not lost. Cocoa beans contain dozens of different phytochemicals, plant compounds, that help to promote health.

Dr. Alice E Lichtenstein, a senior scientist studying aging at Tuft's University, says there are flavonoids that possess anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects in chocolate.

So it's important for potential lovers to keep this vital point in mind when purchasing chocolate. The closer the chocolate is to the cocoa bean, the more of these benefits are present.

Dr. Diane L McKay, assistant professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition, adds that dark chocolate contains the most phytochemicals and has less added sugar and fat.

There's more good news. A 2017 study in the medical journal Nutrients, showed that chocolate consumption was associated with a favourable impact on blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride blood levels, and possibly insulin sensitivity. But don't get carried away and reach for gobs of chocolate. Researchers also reported there was no increased benefit by consuming more than three ounces of chocolate a week.

What do Spanish scientists say about chocolate? Another 2017 study in Spain revealed that older adults who consumed even less than half an ounce of any kind of chocolate daily had better cognitive function than non-chocolate eaters. But the researchers admitted that lifestyle, dietary, and genetic factors, could also have played a role in the result.

However, chocolate may have a beneficial effect on the brain. A 2016 study published in the Journal Appetite, looked at the consumption of chocolate in nearly 1,000 people age 23 to 98 years. They reported the more consumption of chocolate the better the performance on cognitive tests.

No mention was made that this study was sponsored by the chocolate industry. But I would strongly caution that readers should not take this finding as an excuse to go on a chocolate binge.

In researching this column I found that studies about chocolate are not as simple as you would like them to be. For instance, the absorption of flavonoids may vary from person to person depending on what bacteria are present in the bowel.

I also did not enjoy discovering that there are concerns about heavy metal contamination in cocoa powder. For instance, a consumer laboratory found that all of the 43 powders tested contained more than the upper recommended limit of cadmium, which has the potential to damage kidneys and weaken bones if consumed over a long period of time.

Another precaution. If your sweetie suffers from migraine attack, forget chocolates. Buy her flowers. Some research suggests that natural chemicals in cocoa can increase the frequency of migraine attacks. Other research disagrees.

I'd agree with Dr. Lichtenstein that, "If you enjoy chocolate, eat what you like. But be sure to do so in moderation and don't do it for health benefits".

It's also well to remember that you cannot compare the antioxidants in chocolate with those in fruits and vegetables that also contain fiber and vitamins.

I hope I've not been a kill-joy on Valentine's day, putting a damper on a little amour. After all, remember, a healthy lifestyle does not mean you must be good all of the time. Just make sure that being a little bad never becomes a habit.

Online docgiff.com Comments info@docgiff.com



Direct Answers

from Wayne & Tamara

Bystander

I've been married to my wife 16 years, together for 17. We were both young, moving from place to place with the military. She was 19; I was 21. Now we have three kids, two teenagers and an about-to-be teen, I feel our love was at the surface, not a deep love sharing all the feelings within our hearts. Her parents died when she was 15, and she managed to survive until we met. I am normally a quiet person, who tends to keep things bottled inside. At the beginning of our marriage she tried to open my heart to no avail. We would talk, mostly about the kids, rarely about us. I don't suspect any infidelity. We share a mutual understanding of our responsibility toward our family and toward each other in keeping our marriage vows. The past few months I have been trying to open a lot of myself to her. I realize I am lucky she stayed with me this long. We've had good conversations, and she says her life is incomplete. She has a void in her heart. She says she has to find herself and that she felt this way even before she met me. She always says, what is life all about? She tells me about the problems within herself, and I listen. But she is afraid to resolve them. For example, she will say she wants to take college courses to better herself, but when I offer my help, she gets upset. I am currently a drill sergeant in the army. When I offer encouragement, she gets offended and tells me to stop controlling or training her. I really love her and want to know her better. I know what I did in keeping my feelings in a bottle was wrong, and I have to change. When I see her down, it brings me down as well.

Dylan

Dylan, part of this is the classic difference between men and women. Women don't want something fixed; they want to talk about it. Your wife wants to talk and talk until she decides what to do. It doesn't mean she will do something, or plans to do something, or wants to be pushed to do something. She wants to be heard. She doesn't want to be coached. She wants you to look at her and hear her, not nod your head while you watch TV.

You don't explain why you are a changing man, but the same applies to you. For years she tried to get you to open up, and you weren't listening. She had no idea if you would ever open up. You did it when you were ready. It was up to you, and you chose to do it.

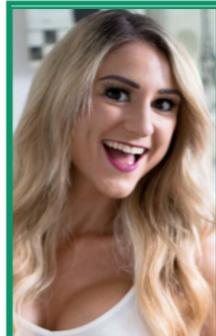
So it is with her. She confessed to a hole that may never fill. It is especially hard to fill an old empty space, because we cannot undo our past. How do you fill the hole where her parents were? It may be, at some point, she will accept that void. For now, she needs you to say, "I hear you. I'm with you. I'm willing. We are together."

A year ago, Tamara was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a double mastectomy. She's in pain and sometimes afraid. I can't take that from her. All I can do is agree, "This really sucks." To satisfy my man desire to do something, I give her heart-shaped, helium-filled balloons. She accepts them, and so it has been a year of heart-shaped balloons.

Your wife struggled to survive between 15 and 18. That struggle created a hole, ancient and unfixable. She needs you to listen and reply, "That really sucks."

Wayne

Send letters to: DirectAnswers@WayneAndTamara.com



Healthy Living Healthy Eating

from Marissa Liana

Certified Nutritional Practitioner/Health Coach Does counting calories to be in a deficit actually result in weight loss?

The short answer is, not always! Despite many people spreading the message that the secret to weight loss is calories in < calories out, not all calories are created equal, as different foods and macronutrients promote different hormonal and metabolic processes in the body.

The foods we eat also have the ability to positively and negatively impact our microbiome (the collection of bacteria living within us).

There is now very clear evidence that those who struggle with obesity actually have different microflora (good bacteria/probiotics) in their G.I tracts than those who are comparatively lean! Gut bacteria play a large role in extracting energy and nutrients from food. If your gut flora is compromised (use of antibiotics, BC pill, diet high in refined carbs and processed food, diet low in fiber, diet lacking in raw, fermented foods) you are not probably utilizing your food for fuel and can carry excess weight.

How can you improve your gut health and lose weight?

1) Get on a high quality probiotic supplement. If I could choose one supplement to take the rest of my life, I would definitely choose probiotics. Probiotics are the "good" bacteria that help keep our digestive systems healthy by controlling growth of harmful bacteria. This eases digestive upsets like IBS, improves weight loss, excess bloating, gas, diarrhea and constipation that are often caused by an overgrowth of bad bacteria and lack of beneficial bacteria (our probiotics). Fermented foods like Kombucha are also a great way to get natural probiotics in your diet.

2) You MUST include adequate PREbiotics in your diet which are plant-fiber foods for our probiotics. Unfortunately the standard American diet lacks foods rich in pre-biotics needed to keep our internal ecosystem (microbiome) happy and this is contributing to the obesity epidemic in our modern day.

For a full digestive supporting and gut healing plan, I recommend my Beat The Bloat meal plan, supplement guide and ebook.

www.marissaliana.com for More info. Stay well. Marissa



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Marissa Liana, CNP, BHSC Kin

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