
Eat This Sweet Treat Daily. Live Longer?

People who indulge their sweet tooth by eating a small piece of dark chocolate every day could live longer.

Call it the new health food. Dark chocolate not only reduces levels of blood sugar and bad cholesterol, but also raises levels of good cholesterol. Net net: It lowers your risk of cardiovascular disease.

How? The magic ingredients in chocolate are compounds called flavanols, which have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, reports HealthDay News.

The study: Led by researchers from San Diego State University, the team randomly assigned 31 people to eat either 50 grams of dark chocolate or 50 grams of white chocolate every day for 15 days. Dark chocolate contains 70 percent cocoa, while white chocolate has no cocoa at all.

Each participant's blood pressure, forearm skin blood flow, circulating lipid (fat) profiles and blood glucose levels were recorded at the beginning and the end of the study period.

The results: Those who consumed the dark chocolate had lower levels of blood glucose and LDL ("bad") cholesterol, as well as higher levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol than those who ate white chocolate.

The gotcha: A little bit goes a long way. While dark chocolate is rich in flavanols, it is also packed with fat and calories. Consume it in moderation.