



How to enjoy Chocolate within a well-balanced and nutritious diet

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Even though chocolate is considered a 'sometimes' food due to its high kilojoule content, it can still be enjoyed occasionally as a part of a well-balanced and healthy diet for the general population.

However, particularly for older adults who are malnourished and have a minimal appetite, it may be enjoyed more regularly in aim to meet their energy requirements.

Cocoa, the basic ingredient in chocolate, contains a group of antioxidants known collectively as flavanols. They may contribute to a range of health benefits such as reducing blood pressure and the risk of heart disease, as well as protecting our skin from UV damage.

Chocolate which contains more than 70% cocoa mass has the highest amount of flavanols contained in the product. Unfortunately, regular milk chocolate contains less than 20% cocoa and white chocolate contains nil, thus unlikely to produce the same health benefits.

Despite its high cocoa percentage, on average dark chocolate still contains similar amounts of fat and sugar per 100g when compared to regular milk chocolate. However, the bitter taste (due to the higher cocoa percentage) in dark chocolate may satisfy cravings in a smaller quantity.

The production of the hormone serotonin, known as the "happy hormone" is also triggered when chocolate is consumed, which may be the reason why it is enjoyed by many individuals worldwide!





Therefore the following tips list how chocolate can still be enjoyed within a healthy diet:

- Focus on quality not quantity, aim for products with more than 70% cocoa mass for the higher flavanol content.
- Eat chocolate mindfully, avoid distractions such as eating in front of the TV and focus your full attention on enjoying this treat. Describe to yourself the taste, texture and smell when consuming the chocolate and enjoy it slowly. You are more likely to be satisfy your cravings using this technique, rather than 'scoffing' it down.
- Share chocolate with your friends and family, therefore you can enjoy it together!
- Make it a special treat, not a staple in your pantry. Aim for a 25g portion (or 4 small squares) when enjoying your chocolate.
- Place it away from eyesight, such as in the pantry. You are more likely to eat chocolate mindlessly if it is within arm's reach, such as on the office desk or on the couch watching TV.



REFERENCES:

1. <http://www.healthyfoodguide.com.au/articles/2013/march/your-guide-chocolate>
2. <http://www.healthyfoodguide.com.au/articles/2016/june/how-beat-chocolate-cravings-and-still-enjoy-chocolate>



Need help with maintaining a well-balanced diet?

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