

Maximum Wellness 8.26.2020
Research Shows Chocolate Reduces Coronary Artery Disease Risk

The European Journal of Preventive Cardiology reported in August of 2020 on Journals.sagepub.com that, “the consumption of chocolate at least once a week is associated with a reduction in the risk of CAD (coronary artery disease).”

According to CDC.gov, CAD, a blockage of the arteries that supply blood to the heart, is the most common type of heart disease – killing 365,914 people in 2017. It’s estimated that 18.2 million adults age 20 and older have CAD – with roughly 2 in 10 deaths from CAD occurring in adults less than 65 years old.

Using a systematic review and meta-analysis (many similar studies), researchers from the VA Medical Center, Icahn School of Medicine, the Mayo and Cleveland Clinics, and the Baylor College of Medicine, extracted information from a database - 1966 to January 2020 - of prospective or cross-sectional studies – with chocolate consumption relative to CAD, acute myocardial infarct, and acute coronary syndrome.

The investigators identified six prospective studies with a median follow-up of 8.78 years – which included 336,289 individuals with 21,777 diseases – “composed of 14,043 cases of CAD, 4,667 myocardial infarctions, 2735 cerebrovascular accidents and 332 cases of heart failure. Study subjects included 266,264 individuals from the United States, 68,809 from Sweden and 1216 from Australia.”

Prior research demonstrated that chocolate consumption was associated with a decrease risk of CAD. The current meta-analysis found that chocolate consumption of more than one time per week or 3.5 times per month was associated with a reduced risk of CAD.

The researchers point out that, “chocolate consumption may offer cardioprotective effects due to several nutrients.” For instance, it was noted that, “flavanols (e.g. epicatechin, catechin and procyanidins) have been shown to reduce myocardial infarct size in one animal study, to reduce platelet aggregation and improve endothelial function in several randomized controlled trials of healthy individuals, or people with CAD.’

In addition, chocolate components, including methylxanthines, have been shown to have beneficial effects on cardiovascular function, while polyphenols have been

shown to facilitate nitric oxide synthesis, and stearic acid has also been shown to reduce mean platelet volume.

The researchers point out that, “fats, milk, or sugar in chocolate, total energy intake, body mass index, and types of chocolate products (milk, dark, or white) could confound any potential association observed” – meaning that there could be unfavorable effects of the extra calories associated with commercial chocolate versus the beneficial effects tied to consumption of dark chocolate - with a much lower sugar and saturated fat content.

Be moderate in all things, to quote Buddha.