

7/29:

Dark Chocolate: Eat more to lose weight

Introduction:

Not all chocolate is alike. Eat a chocolate bunny every day and you will undoubtedly gain weight. However, the opposite is true if you eat small amounts of dark chocolate. Dark chocolate is filled with valuable nutrients. It also contains appetite suppressants that will decrease the urge to eat sugar filled snacks. The following list of questions and answers reviews the amazing benefits of snacking on dark chocolate.

Q. What makes dark chocolate so healthy?

- A. One of the key ingredients that makes dark chocolate a super-food is that it contains high level of **flavonoids**. Flavonoids are powerful anti-oxidants that reduce cardiovascular risks, improve memory and reduce cravings for sugar.
- Dark chocolate is also rich in healthy plant fats, which are slowly absorbed and thus delay the return of hunger.

Q. How it helps with weight loss.

- A. One approach is to eat a thumb-sized bite of dark chocolate 20 minutes before and five minutes after breakfast, lunch and dinner to **cut your appetite by up to 50 percent** according to one dietary expert.
- My own approach is to have dark chocolate available as a between meal snack. I just eat a small piece of dark chocolate (size of a dime and eat slowly) to bridge the gap between meals.

Q. What is the best kind of dark chocolate for weight loss?

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- A. Since it is the cocoa beans that provides most of the nutrients, it is only logical that the higher the percent of cocoa the better. The minimal percent of cocoa that has the desired benefits is 70%. For many people, dark chocolate is an acquired taste so it is reasonable for people who have not acquired a taste for dark chocolate to start at 70% with the goal of ultimately reaching 85 to 90%.
- A quick review of sugar content should help clarify this issue. Assuming the intake of 40 grams of chocolate (slightly bigger than the size of you thumb), the following lists the sugar content of various choices of chocolate.
 - Milky Way candy bar: 40 (grams) note: thumb sized portion
 - 70% chocolate: 11 grams
 - 85%: 6 grams
 - 90%: 4 grams
 - 100%) Zero grams
 - Also note: the lower the percent of sugar the higher the percent of helpful nutrients including those that facilitate weight loss.

Q. Where to purchase dark chocolate.

- My hands down favorite is **Trader Joe's**. Great selection, high quality and low priced.
- A quick web review will provide loads of other options to purchase.

Q. What are the potential side effects of eating dark chocolate?

A. Dark chocolate contains caffeine.

- If you are sensitive to caffeine, don't eat dark chocolate at night.
- Weight gain. Be careful to eat slowly and only a small portion.

- Like many other foods, some people have digestive problem that are associated with eating dark chocolate, but if eaten in small amounts, adverse side effects are rare.

Next issue of Ask the Doc will describe my favorite way to snack on dark chocolate: chocolate covered macadamia nuts.

Let us know if you have comments or questions. Contact us at msprouse@beawarefoundation.org

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The End
