

5 delicious ways to Enjoy the Benefits of Chocolate

*Are you a **chocoholic**? You may love chocolate for its flavor. Maybe you like the way it feels in your mouth. Maybe you like it for its health benefits. Whatever the reason, it is important to know that more isn't always better. Keep these tips in mind to get the most out of any chocolate eating experience.*

1. Go to the dark side of the chocolate aisle.

Flavonoids are the healthy compounds in chocolate. Flavonoids help your heart. They do this by lowering your blood pressure or cholesterol levels. Dark chocolate and baking chocolate have the most flavonoids. Milk and Dutch chocolate don't have as many. Some products now list the amount of cacao on the package, so the higher the percentage, the better.

2. Enjoy chocolate after a balanced meal.

Don't fool yourself! Flavonoids do have health benefits. But no chocolate product is nutrient-rich. Lean meats have more protein than chocolate. Fruits, veggies, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods have more vitamins and minerals. Your best bet? Enjoy chocolate after a meal that has foods from each of the groups.

3. Be size-wise about chocolate servings.

It takes a very small piece of chocolate a day to keep the doctor away. A king-size candy bar is not a smart choice, even if the chocolate is very dark. Candy bars are high in calories, fat and sugar. Look for small portions – about ¼ ounce each. If you have a large bar, break it into small pieces.

4. Combine chocolate with fruit and nuts.

Mix chocolate with fruit or nuts to multiply your health benefits. Need ideas? Dip a strawberry in dark chocolate. Enjoy chocolate-coated almonds for dessert. Make a snack mix with dried fruit, peanuts and bits of dark chocolate.

5. Savor every bite.

Slow down! When we savor our food, we are satisfied with smaller amounts. We eat with all of our senses. We smell our food's aroma, feel its texture and taste its flavor. When we give chocolate the attention it deserves, that very small piece can be just the right size!

