



**Just 1 oz of dark chocolate packs a big antioxidant wallop**

by Linda Rao

You've read it before: Dark chocolate, the richer in cocoa the better, is not only a to-die-for treat, it's actually good for you. And just 1 oz of a very special chocolate packs more than twice the healthy antioxidant punch of red wine or other dark chocolates.

Dove Dark, made by Mars, Inc., contains Cocompro cocoa, a proprietary, specially processed cocoa that contains superhigh levels of flavanols--so high that Dove Dark is used in medical research.

"Cocoa is rich in antioxidant flavonoids called flavanols, which include procyanidins, epicatechins, and catechins," explains Harold Schmitz, PhD, director of science at Mars, Inc. Studies have shown that people with high blood levels of flavonoids have lower risk of heart disease, lung cancer, prostate cancer, asthma, and type 2 diabetes.

Several studies in animals and humans have shown the heart-healthy effects of chocolate's antioxidants. One of these studies, led by Penny Kris-Etherton, PhD, RD, distinguished professor of nutrition at Penn State University, found that people who ate a diet rich in cocoa powder and dark chocolate had lower oxidation levels of bad LDL cholesterol, higher blood antioxidant levels, and 4 percent higher levels of good HDL cholesterol.

Here are the good things research shows that Cocompro cocoa can do.

#### **Act as an antioxidant.**

Researchers at the University of California, Davis compared the effects of 1 1/3 oz of high-flavanol Dove Dark chocolate with the same amount of low-flavanol dark chocolate on 10 healthy people. They found that only the Dove Dark had heart-healthy benefits: It reduced LDL oxidation and boosted antioxidant levels and HDL concentrations in the blood.

Other studies have shown that the higher the Cocompro "dose," the higher the levels of antioxidants in the blood and the less LDL oxidation.

#### **Keep blood platelets from clumping.**

In the test tube, Cocompro cocoa reduces blood clotting; it may also stabilize arterial plaque, making it less likely to travel and cause a stroke or heart attack. This effect is similar to that of aspirin.

#### **Increase blood vessel flexibility.**

Unlike aspirin, some of the procyanidins in Cocompro trigger the production of nitric oxide, which helps keep arteries flexible and increases bloodflow. "This connection has potential implications for blood pressure control," says Dr. Schmitz.

#### **Size Does Matter**

"My research shows that a diet containing about an ounce of chocolate a day increases good cholesterol and prevents bad cholesterol from oxidizing, a process that may lead to heart disease," says Dr. Kris-Etherton.

Does this mean you should run to the supermarket and load your cart with Kit Kats and Milky Ways for "medicinal purposes"? You know better than that.

"It's okay to eat dark chocolate in small amounts, as long as you eat an otherwise healthy diet and can afford the calories," Dr. Kris-Etherton says. "Try eating it with nuts or fruit for more good fats and even more

antioxidants."

But don't use chocolate as a stand-in for fat-free fruits and veggies. It just doesn't work that way. An ounce of dark chocolate can contain a whopping 11 g of fat, so you have to compromise elsewhere in your diet to make room for the calories. But if you eat your 1-oz piece of chocolate slowly and mindfully, it should satisfy your most serious chocolate cravings, which can help you stick to a healthy eating plan.

### Which Chocolate's the Healthiest?

Flavanol values aren't listed on labels, so "there's no way a consumer can tell which chocolates have the most," says Carl Keen, PhD, professor of nutrition and internal medicine at the University of California, Davis.

Bottom line: The chocolates with the highest cocoa content have the highest flavanol content. These chocolates get high marks for their superior levels of flavanol.

Product	Calories	Fat
El Rey Gran Saman Dark Chocolate 70% cocoa (1.4 oz)	190	15 g
Scharffen Berger Bittersweet 70% cocoa (1 oz)	170	11 g
Lake Champlain Dark Chocolate 54% cocoa (1.5 oz)	240	16 g

### Our Favorite Hot Cocoa

This yummy cocoa is rich in antioxidants. It takes a few minutes to prepare, but the reward is worth its weight in, well, chocolate!

Fill a mug with 1 cup of 1 percent milk, and microwave on medium for about 1 minute. Carefully remove, and add two Dove Dark Promises. Stir gently until the chocolate melts. Enjoy!

**Another tip:** Think *real* cocoa. Joe Vinson, PhD, professor of chemistry at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania, has found that pure cocoa powder (not the instant hot chocolate type) has the most antioxidants, followed by dark chocolate, then milk chocolate.

(For a delicious chocolate treat, check out our "[Triple Dark Chocolate Mousse Pie](#).")