

Dark Chocolate Treats Could Help Stave Off Heart Disease

A FEW squares of dark chocolate every day could help stave off heart disease, researchers have found.

Its anti-oxidants may prevent arteries narrowing and hardening, according to the team from Switzerland. The scientists reached their conclusion after testing a group of 20 healthy smokers.

The men were asked not to eat foods rich in anti-oxidants - such as onions, apples and cabbage - before being fed 40g (2oz) portions of different types of chocolate. Smokers have an increased risk of hardened arteries and heart disease.

But after two hours, ultrasound scans revealed that dark chocolate consisting of at least 74% cocoa solids had "significantly improved" blood flow. White chocolate produced no beneficial effects. The scientists said dark chocolate had more anti-oxidants per gram than many other foodstuffs whose virtues were already recognised, such as red wine, green tea and berry fruits.

They conclude: "A small daily treat of dark chocolate may substantially increase the amount of anti-oxidant intake and beneficially affect vascular health

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