

Tips on Healthy Cognitive Aging

Diet Tips:
INCLUDING DARK CHOCOLATE
AND NUTS IN YOUR DIET



RESEARCH MISSION

To discover the mysteries of the normally aging brain to achieve a lifetime of cognitive health.

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INCLUDE *Dark Chocolate* IN YOUR DIET!

WHY SHOULD I EAT DARK CHOCOLATE?



Experts studying the causes and patterns of diseases have conducted trials that suggest consumption of dark chocolate is associated with heart and brain health. Evidence suggests that it lowers blood pressure, increases the body's "good" cholesterol, lowers "bad" cholesterol, reduces inflammation, helps regulate the body's response to insulin, and increases blood flow to the brain. And it tastes good!

WHAT IN DARK CHOCOLATE IS BENEFICIAL FOR MY BRAIN?

Dark chocolate contains compounds called flavonoids. Found in the cacao plant, flavonoids are believed to promote memory and overall cognitive health.



I PREFER MILK CHOCOLATE. WHY CAN'T I JUST EAT THAT?

Because dark chocolate contains a higher percentage of natural cacao, the plant that contains flavonoids, and although milk chocolate contains some flavonoids, the increased milk may make it harder for the body to absorb them.

WHAT STUDIES HAVE BEEN DONE TO PROVE DARK CHOCOLATE'S BENEFITS?

An observational study followed a group of people called the Kuna Indians, a population living on small islands off the coast of Panama who drink large amounts of traditional cocoa drinks.

Virtually free of hypertension and cardiovascular diseases, when the Kuna migrate to Panama City they apparently quickly lose this advantage. Researchers determined that this change could not have been caused by salt intake or stress. Kuna in Panama do not drink large amounts of traditional cocoa drinks. So while no direct link can be claimed between their health and cocoa intake, the change in diet after their migration is notable.¹

¹McCullough et al. (2006) J Cardiovasc Pharmacol

²Frances et al. (2006) J. Cardiovasc Pharmacol

In a study conducted on young people, researchers used special brain imaging techniques to show that participants who ate high doses of flavanol (150 mg flavanols) had increased blood and oxygenation flow to the brain.²



INCLUDE *Nuts* IN YOUR DIET!

WHY SHOULD I EAT NUTS?

Nuts are also high in flavonoids. So they have anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that affect your brain. They also contain a host of other nutrients and vitamins. People who eat nuts are also more likely to partake in other healthy activities, such as exercising, eating fruits and vegetables, smoking less, and drinking moderately, so they tend to live longer and healthier lives overall.³



WHAT STUDIES HAVE BEEN DONE TO PROVE NUTS' BENEFITS ON BRAIN HEALTH?

One study looking at the effects of a Mediterranean diet (high in nuts) in relation to cognitive function suggested that consumption of walnuts was associated with higher working memory function in elderly participants.⁴ In another study, researchers discovered that participants (from 55-80 years old) who added 30g of nuts to their diets per day had a reduced risk of disease.⁵

THERE ARE SO MANY KINDS OF NUTS. WHAT KIND SHOULD I EAT?

One study asked participants whether they ate peanuts or tree nuts.

Tree nuts include: almonds, cashews, chestnuts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachios, and walnuts.

Tree nuts and peanuts were found to be effective in reducing mortality in studies, so choose whatever nuts you like the best!

OK, SO THIS MEANS I CAN EAT ALL THE CHOCOLATE AND NUTS THAT I WANT, RIGHT?

Not quite. It's best to stick to a healthy and well balanced diet!



³Bao et al. (2013) New England Journal of Medicine

⁴Valls-Pedret et al. (2012) Journal of Alzheimer's Disease

⁵Estruch et al. (2013) New England Journal of Medicine

WANT MORE TIPS?

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