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Chocolate Fights off Fatigue

It's all about polyphenols

Chocolate is known to be good for memory, sex drive, tooth health, mood and long life. But a new dark chocolate formula could also fight against symptoms of the chronic fatigue syndrome. A pilot trial made at Hull York Medical School revealed that subjects experienced less fatigue when consuming dark chocolate with a high cocoa level than white chocolate dyed brown. The results could be linked to the dark chocolate's effects on the brain molecule serotonin. Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), also called ME, has a wide array of symptoms but the main one is the profound muscle fatigue following physical activity. "The idea for the study came after a patient reported feeling much better after swapping her normal milk chocolate for dark chocolate with a high cocoa solid content." said lead researcher Professor Steve Atkin, an expert in endocrinology. The research was made on 10 ME subjects who consumed a daily dose of 45g dark chocolate or white chocolate colored to resemble dark chocolate for two months. After a break that lasted one month, the subjects switched between the chocolate types for another two months. Those on dark chocolate experienced significantly less fatigue and perceived more fatigue when they stopped consuming it. "Although it was a small study, two patients went back to work after being off for six months. Dark chocolate is high in polyphenols, which have been associated with health benefits such as a reduction in blood pressure. Also high polyphenols appear to improve levels of serotonin in the brain, which has been linked with chronic fatigue syndrome and that may be a mechanism." said Atkin. Supplementary research, on bigger pools, is necessary to confirm the findings, but the dark chocolate quantities employed in the study did not make subjects put on any weight. "If you derive benefit, then it's a no-harm, no-risk situation." said Atkin. "It is important to distinguish between ME and other types of fatigue. But a little bit of what you fancy does you good - if it's not doing you any harm and it seems to be helping you then fair enough but I don't think it's an instant cure." said Jane Colby, executive director of The Young ME Sufferers Trust. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if eating chocolate every day could alleviate the symptoms of chronic illness? If it were that easy, there would not be 250,000 people in the UK today whose lives are being devastated by ME." said Heather Walker, Communications Manager, Action for ME.