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CollegeCandy

Chocolate Lowers Cholesterol

Epecially bars enriched with sterols

Since childhood, you've been hearing that chocolate destroys your teeth and makes you fat, but now, a series of researches have been made to show the beneficial health effects of chocolate. There is only one condition though: it must have as much cocoa as possible, even up to 60-75%. Thus, we're talking about dark chocolate, not milk chocolate. A new study carried out at the University of Illinois and published in the Journal of Nutrition says that chocolate even lowers the cholesterol levels, by 2% total cholesterol and by 5.3% LDL or "bad" cholesterol, due to the sterols added to the chocolate bars. "Eating two CocoaVia dark chocolate bars a day not only lowered cholesterol, it had the unexpected effect of also lowering systolic blood pressure," said John Erdman, a U. of I. professor of food science and human nutrition, who attributed this effect to the flavanols encountered in dark chocolate. The 49 subjects had slightly elevated cholesterol and normal blood pressure. They started the "Eating Plan for Healthy Americans" (formerly known as the Step 1 diet) two weeks before the research began and then they were assigned to two groups. The researchers tested 2 types of CocoaVia bars: one with plant sterols and one devoid of them. While continuing with the AHA diet, the subjects consumed one CocoaVia bar (each bar contained 100 calories) twice daily for four weeks, then they changed it for the other bar for another four weeks. "After the participants started the AHA diet, a lot of them began to lose weight, so we had to keep fussing at them to eat more. We didn't want a weight change because that also lowers cholesterol. After starting the CocoaVia bars, we saw a marked differential effect on blood cholesterol, with the sterol-containing products doing better than those without sterols," said co-author Ellen Evans, a U. of I. professor of kinesiology and community health. Nevertheless, as the research was partially funded by Mars Inc., the producer of the bars, some regard the research as flawed. "Mars has spent millions of dollars studying the biological impact of the flavanols found in cocoa beans and learning how to retain their benefits during the refining process," said Erdman, also chair of the Mars Scientific Advisory Council, in the company's defense.