Dark Chocolate, Milk chocolate or White Chocolate – Which is the Healthiest Option

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The world is divided when it comes to the taste of chocolates – some like it sweet and soft while others like it bitter and crunchy. The three most popular types of chocolates available around the world are dark chocolate, milk chocolate, and white chocolate. In recent times, dark chocolate has gained popularity among health conscious people because of its high antioxidant content, and we are all aware of the benefits of dark chocolate on skin and for overall health but the other two varieties also possess some health benefits and in this article we will discuss about the health benefits of dark chocolate, milk chocolate, white chocolate and evaluate which is the healthiest of all.

Difference between Dark Chocolate, Milk Chocolate and White Chocolate

Before getting on with the health benefits of different types of chocolates, let us know the difference between these 3 popular types of chocolates. The common ingredient in all types of chocolates is cocoa. Chocolate is manufactured from cocoa beans that are harvested, ground up and liquefied in order to prepare the chocolate liquor. This bitter liquor is further processes to form cocoa solids and cocoa butter. It is the cocoa solids that render the characteristic bitter taste to the chocolate. The different combinations of cocoa solids and cocoa butter along with other ingredients give rise to various types of chocolates. So, what is dark chocolate? Well, dark chocolate can be considered chocolate in its purest form. It contains the highest percentage of cocoa solids and cocoa butter, and the other added ingredients are cocoa bean powder and sugar.

Milk chocolate contains both cocoa solids and cocoa butter, but in much smaller percentage. It also contains milk powder and sugar which gives it a smoother, creamier and sweeter taste. But then one might ask is white chocolate real chocolate? To tell the truth, white chocolate does not contain cocoa solids at all; it only contains a small percentage of cocoa butter along with sugar and milk.

7 Health Benefits of Dark Chocolate

The easiest way to determine the healthiest type of chocolate is by knowing the health benefits of the different types of chocolates. Let us begin with the health benefits of dark chocolate that contains the highest percentage of cocoa.

Rich Source of Health Benefiting Minerals and Nutrients

The high concentration of essential minerals in dark chocolate is what makes it the winner among all the varieties and it is one of the remarkable health benefits of chocolate consumption on a daily basis. Dark chocolate contains a high concentration of cocoa along with the decent amount of soluble fibers and minerals such as iron, copper, magnesium, manganese, potassium, phosphorus, zinc and selenium.

The fatty acids present in dark chocolate are mostly monounsaturated and saturated fats along with small amounts of polyunsaturated fats that help in the healthy functioning of the heart. Dark chocolate also contains stimulants such as theobromine and caffeine which are beneficial for health when taken in limited quantity.

Aids Weight Loss

The topic of dark chocolate weight loss is quite a common one in the health circle. Dark chocolate helps to promote weight loss and prevent unhealthy late night food cravings that are one of the main reasons for obesity and overweight issues. Consuming 1 ounce of dark chocolate with 70 to 85% cocoa content 3 times a week can help to lose extra body weight.

Dark chocolate is rich in soluble fibers that help you to stay full and satiated for a longer period of time and cuts out the craving for fatty, salty and sweet foods. It also helps to speed up the metabolism so that the body burns more calories.

Powerful Antioxidants

The best dark chocolate varieties are loaded with antioxidants that help to neutralize the harmful effects of free radicals and oxidative stress on the cells.

Free radicals are one of the main reasons for premature skin aging and cancer. Therefore, eating antioxidant-rich foods like dark chocolate goes a long way in providing protection from many types of cancer and slows down the process of skin aging.

Helps Control Blood Sugar

Dark chocolate is especially useful in providing protection against Type 2 Diabetes. It not only keeps the blood vessels healthy and reduces the effects of inflammation caused by diabetes, but also reduce insulin resistance of the cells so that they can function normally and regain the capacity to utilize insulin efficiently.

Moreover, dark chocolate has a relatively low glycemic index which makes it a healthy food for diabetic patients because it won't cause any sudden rise in blood sugar levels.

Boost Brain Functions

Dark chocolate helps to increase blood flow to the brain and the heart which in turn aids to improve cognitive functions and reduce the risk of stroke. Caffeine present in dark chocolate works as a stimulant and helps to enhance alertness, concentration and performance.

Dark chocolate also contains chemical Phenylethylamine (PEA) which promotes the brain to release endorphins – the feel-good hormone that helps to reduce stress and tension and boost the mood instantly.

Lower Hypertension

Dark chocolate must be included in the high blood pressure diet chart because it helps to improve blood flow through the blood vessels and arteries and lower high blood pressure efficiently. The flavonols present in dark chocolate stimulate the linings of the arteries to produce nitric oxide that promotes the arteries to relax.

This in turn reduces resistance to blood flow and also reduces blood pressure. Although caffeine present in dark chocolate can increase blood pressure initially, the effect is temporary and mild.

Reduces Oxidation of Unhealthy LDL Cholesterol

Oxidation of LDL cholesterol means the cholesterol has reacted with free radicals which make them capable of damaging tissues and linings of arteries. Oxidization of LDL cholesterol can lead to serious health conditions and affect overall cardiovascular health.

But dark chocolate helps to decrease the oxidation of LDL cholesterol significantly. It also increases the total level of healthy HDL cholesterol and lowers the level of total LDL cholesterol in people with elevated cholesterol.

Best Dark Chocolate Brands: Some of the best dark chocolate brands from which you can choose the finest quality dark chocolates are Ghirardelli Intense Dark Chocolate, Lindt Excellence Dark Chocolate, Endangered Species Dark Chocolate, Green and Blacks Organic Dark Chocolate, Pascha Organic Dark Chocolate, Scharffen Berger Dark Chocolate, Godiva Dark Chocolate, etc.

7 Health Benefits of Milk Chocolate

Next in line is the sweeter and creamier milk chocolate that contains added sugar and milk, but it is still beneficial for improving heart health and developing stronger bones because of the antioxidants and calcium content.

Healthy Heart

Research shows that people who consume up to 100 grams of milk chocolate or dark chocolate every day are 11% less likely to have a heart attack or stroke or suffer from other cardiovascular problems compared to people who did not eat chocolate at all. The antioxidant flavonoids found in both dark and milk chocolate helps to stimulate blood flow to the brain and the rest of the body and neutralizes the harmful effects of free radicals.

The flavonols also help to lower blood pressure and prevent the blood platelets from sticking to each other and forming clots which is the major reason for a stroke. But in the case of milk chocolates, the benefits may also be associated with the milk components – namely calcium and fatty acids present in the chocolate.

Improved Brain Functions

Just like dark chocolate, milk chocolate also contains magnesium – one of the important minerals in the human body that is necessary for healthy functioning of the brain. Although half a bar of dark chocolate contains 23% magnesium, the quantity is 7% in case of milk chocolate, it is still beneficial for improving brain functions.

In addition, the caffeine content in milk chocolate helps to boost concentration, alertness and performance. Eating just 2 squares of milk chocolate a day helps to improve cognitive activity significantly.

Prevents Colds

The zinc content in dark chocolate and milk chocolate is almost same, and this mineral helps to boost immune power and prevent cough, cold and fever. It enhances the natural disease-fighting capacity of the body to fight against a plethora of viruses, bacteria, and allergens.

In addition, the naturally occurring antioxidant phenolics found in milk chocolate also boosts the immune system.

Improves Skin and Hair

One of the amazing benefits of milk chocolate is that it helps you to achieve beautiful skin and hair. Cocoa butter is commonly used in beauty products such as creams, balms and waxes that help to hydrate the skin and neutralize skin damage caused by sun exposure, pollution, and alcohol. Raw cocoa powder is also used in various facial treatments to ward off blemishes and boost collagen to make the cheeks plump, supple and youthful.

Eating at least 20 grams of milk chocolate can help in minimizing wrinkles and dark spots caused by UV radiations. Eating small amounts of chocolate a few times in a week can also promote hair growth and thicken hair by promoting blood circulation to the scalp. It is one of the most delicious natural remedies for hair growth that everyone would love to try.

Stops Tooth Decay

Contrary to popular belief, dark chocolate, and milk chocolate can actually improve the health of the teeth and prevent tooth decay. The stimulant compound theobromine present in these two varieties of chocolate hardens the tooth enamel and works even better than fluoride. The protective layer formed by theobromine protects the teeth against erosion caused by acids.

Cocoa present in milk chocolate also helps fight oral bacteria. The best way to make the most of the benefits of chocolate for healthy teeth is to eat a square of chocolate after a meal.

Stronger Bones

Milk chocolate and white chocolate are winners over dark chocolate in case of calcium. Both milk chocolate and white chocolate contain a high percentage of calcium which is extremely beneficial for healthy bones. Improving calcium supply to the bones is one of the biggest benefits of eating milk chocolate.

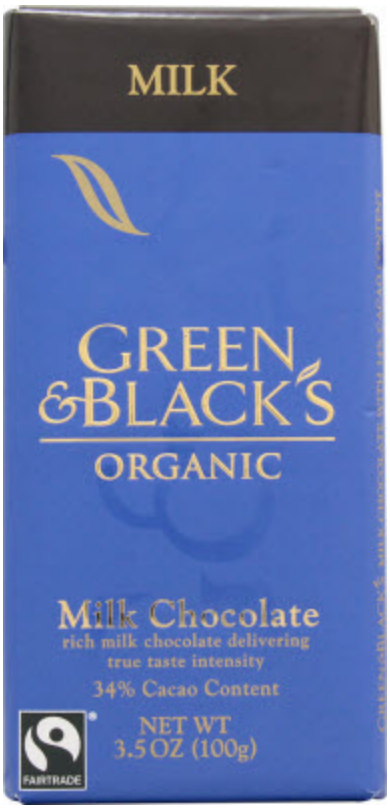
Calcium is the most important mineral for the human body that is required by each and every cell including the heart, muscles, and the nervous system, and it is the quintessential building block of bone health in both men and women. Half a bar of milk chocolate contains almost 8% calcium which helps to improve bone strength and enhance bone density and reduce the risk of fractures and osteoporosis in elderlies.

Rich Nutrition Content

Yet another reason to include milk chocolate in your healthy foods list is the milk chocolate nutrition profile.

Despite the fat and sugar content, milk chocolate also contains other essential nutrients that are necessary for maintaining and supporting overall health. 1.5 ounce of milk chocolate contains 83 milligrams of calcium, 1miligram of iron, 164 milligrams of potassium, 1-milligram zinc, and 86 units of vitamin A and 2.5 micrograms of vitamin K.

Best Milk Chocolate Brands: Some of the smoothest and creamiest of milk chocolates are produced by brands such as Lindt Milk chocolate, Ritter Sport Milk Chocolate, Ghirardelli Milk Chocolate, Trader Joe's Milk Chocolate, Newman's Own Organics Milk Chocolate, Green & Black's Milk Chocolate and Hershey's Milk Chocolate.



6 Health Benefits of White Chocolate

Most people feel that there are not many health benefits of white chocolate because it contains sugar, artificial flavours, and cocoa butter and lacks cocoa solids and cocoa powder. But in reality, white chocolate is not that bad. Let us look into some of the lesser known white chocolate health benefits.

Improves Cardiovascular Health

Good quality white chocolate is made from pure cocoa butter that is rich in fatty acids and antioxidants that help to reduce inflammatory conditions in the heart. The flavonoids in white chocolate prevent clumping of the arteries and reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

White chocolate undergoes much less oxidation during storage and cooking which prevents it from turning carcinogenic. High stearic acid content in cocoa butter means that white chocolate has every little effect on cholesterol.

Lowers the Level of High Blood Pressure

One of the amazing white chocolate benefits is that it helps to control hypertension which is one of the main causes of heart diseases. The antioxidants present in white chocolate aids the blood vessels to dilate and function with ease.

Although white chocolate does not cause any serious side effects, it is best to consume it in limited quantity because of the high calorie and sugar content.

Reduce Skin Aging

White chocolate is the ultimate secret ingredient for glowing skin home remedies that stops the flow of time and reduces the appearance of the signs of skin aging such as wrinkles, fine lines, age spots, etc. Wrinkles and fine lines are an outcome of dryness of skin caused by loss of natural oils from the skin surface.

White chocolate is a rich source of healthy fats that helps to eliminate blemishes, fine lines, wrinkles and acne and provide fuller, plumper and youthful cheeks and a glowing face.

Rich Source of Antioxidants

Not many of us know that even white chocolate is also a powerful source of antioxidants. The antioxidants found in white chocolate are called flavonoids and polyphenols which are extracted from the seeds and skin pigments of the plant, and it is present in high concentration in the cocoa butter.

The antioxidants possess powerful anti-inflammatory properties which can help in inhibiting cancerous tumour growth. These antioxidants neutralize the cell damage caused by free radicals and oxidative stress and aid to improve overall health.

Improved Bone and Teeth Health

This is by far one of the most important health benefits of white chocolate, thanks to the high percentage of calcium in this particular chocolate type. Calcium and other nutrients present in white chocolate help to improve bone strength and bone density and reduce the risk of developing progressive bone diseases like osteoporosis in women and elderly people.

Just 3 ounces of white chocolate contain 169 milligrams of calcium, which helps to keep the bones and teeth strong and aids in normal functioning of the heart, nerves and muscles. It also reduces the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and stroke.

Ideal for Caffeine Intolerant People

Despite the numerous health benefits of dark chocolate and milk chocolate, the high caffeine content in these two varieties makes it impossible for people with caffeine intolerance to enjoy the taste of chocolate. It is the same caffeine from which the disadvantages of coffee spring up. But white chocolate is a delicious option for caffeine intolerant individuals. Because white chocolate doesn't contain cocoa solids or cocoa powder, so it reduces the chances of insomnia, sleeping disorders, heartburn, irritability, headaches, rapid heartbeat and muscle aches. White chocolate is the only type of chocolate that can be enjoyed before going to bed without affecting your sleep.

Best White Chocolate Brands: Some of the superior quality white chocolate options to choose from are Lindt White Chocolate, Felchlin Mont Blanc Couverture, Valrhona Ivoire, Askinosie Davao White Chocolate, E. Guittard High Sierra, Vintage Plantations 33% Cacao White Chocolate, El Rey Icoa, Perugina White Chocolate, Ghirardelli Chocolate White Chocolate Baking Bar and Cacao Barry Zephyr.

Which is the Healthiest Option – Dark, Milk or White?

Well, which chocolate is your favorite solely depends on which taste you like the most, and it is a completely subjective opinion, but when it comes to health benefits, dark chocolate emerges as the clear winner because of the highest levels of antioxidants, minerals, and vitamins. The nutritional profile of milk chocolate is higher than that of white chocolate because of the presence of cocoa in it and it can have positive effects on the health when consumed in limited amounts. White chocolate is not a good choice for those trying to lose weight because of its high-calorie content. However, white chocolate contains a high percentage of calcium which aids to provide healthy bones.

Any chocolate; whether dark chocolate, milk chocolate or white chocolate should be consumed only in limited quantity because of the high calorie and sugar content in all the varieties. Eating too much chocolate can lead to weight gain and increase the risk of obesity.

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