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What Makes Chocolate Healthy? Science Says Zinc Is The Treat's Health Boosting Mineral

Until about a year ago, I did not buy into the

chocolate hype. If given the choice, I used to pick cookie dough ice cream every time, and I always preferred fruity desserts to anything rich in chocolate. *Dang* was I missing out, though. Once I was converted to team chocolate by a particularly spectacular chocolate Oreo ice cream sundae, there was no turning back. If you're a fellow chocoholic, listen up, because a new study revealed what makes chocolate healthy, and TBH, the overall health benefits of the treat are basically about as numerous as the amount of chocolate chip cookies I can put away in one sitting — you feel me?

The new study, published in the scientific journal *Nature Chemistry*, found that zinc can help reduce something called your oxidative stress, which can contribute to aging and a shorter life expectancy. BTW, zinc is a nutrient your body depends on to support your immune system and metabolism, among other functions, as per the Mayo Clinic. And while you can opt for a zinc supplement, a ScienceDaily press release about the study states that the mineral seems to be more effective in combating oxidative stress when combined with food, so having zinc in your chocolate — or even coffee or tea,

as per ScienceDaily — may help your body absorb it more easily. In other words, eat more chocolate, and you might just extend your lifespan — yes, really.

Giphy

The thing about chocolate is, it may be considered first and foremost to be an indulgent dessert, but the stuff actually boasts a pretty decent amount of health benefits. "Chocolate has a very high flavanol content compared to other foods, so it's an easy way to get a high dose of what appears to be an important boost to mental health," Ivana Chapman, a certified strength and conditioning specialist and fitness and nutrition coach, tells Elite Daily in an email.

What's more, apparently chocolate (specifically *dark* chocolate) can also be good for your skin. "Dark chocolate contains zinc and selenium, which are linked to the creation of elastin, a protein forming the main constituent of elastic connective tissue, found especially in the dermis of the skin," **Dr. Niket Sonpal, a board-certified internist and gastroenterologist**, tells Elite Daily.

Speaking of dark chocolate, that's one slightly big catch to mention here: If you're on team white chocolate, or even milk chocolate, I'm sorry to say that you may not be reaping quite as many health benefits. "When choosing a chocolate, you want to find the highest percent of cocoa possible, as this tells you there has been less 'junk' added to it," says Marissa Meshulam, a registered dietitian based in New York City. But no need to go all the way to unsweetened cocoa, she explains. "I look for 70 percent cocoa as a good number, as this chocolate still maintains its integrity while tasting good, too."

"Those wishing to reap the cardiovascular benefits of chocolate should aim for two tablespoons of non-alkalized (or non-Dutch processed) cocoa powder per day," says Kim Yawitz, a registered dietitian nutritionist in private practice in St. Louis. Personally, I love making my own hot chocolate using dark cocoa powder, or even mixing in a little of the stuff to my smoothies or morning oatmeal for some extra chocolatey goodness. But if you want to go straight for the candy, Yawitz tells Elite Daily, "you can obtain the same level of flavonoids in about 1.75 ounces of 70 to85 percent dark chocolate, or 10.5 ounces of milk chocolate."

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