

## Give the One You Love Dark Chocolate

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With **Valentine's Day** upon us, think dark chocolate. Dark chocolate is loaded with nutrients, is the best source of antioxidants, and can lower your chance of heart disease.

1. **Dark Chocolate is Very Nutritious.** Quality dark chocolate that is high in cocoa is a nutritious containing soluble fiber containing minerals. A 3.5 oz. bar of dark chocolate with 70-85% cocoa contains: 11 grams of fiber, 67% of the RDA (recommended daily allowance) for Iron, 58% of the RDA for Magnesium, 89% of the RDA for Copper, 98% of the RDA for Manganese, and plenty of potassium, phosphorus, zinc, and selenium. However, a 3.5 oz. bar of chocolate also contains 600 calories and a moderate amount of sugar.
2. **Dark chocolate is a powerful source of antioxidants.** Believe it or not, chocolate is made from plants and contains many of the health benefits of dark vegetables. Dark chocolate is loaded with organic compounds that are biologically active and function as antioxidants.
3. **Dark Chocolate May Lower Blood Pressure and Cholesterol.** Dark chocolate contains flavanols which assist in relaxing arteries, therefore, lowering resistance to blood flow and reducing blood pressure. Dark chocolate has also been shown to reduce LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol).
4. **Dark Chocolate May Protect Your Skin Against the Sun.** The flavanols in dark chocolate can also protect your skin against sun-induced damage, improve blood flow to the skin, and increase skin density and hydration.
5. **Dark Chocolate May Improve Brain Function.** One study of healthy volunteers showed that 5 days of consuming high-flavanol cocoa improved blood flow to the brain. Cocoa also contains stimulant substances like caffeine and theobromine, which may be a key reason cocoa can improve brain function in the short term.
6. **Dark Chocolate Improves Your Mood.** Chocolate contains phenylethylamine (PEA), the same chemical your brain creates when you feel like you're falling in love. PEA encourages your brain to release endorphins, so eating dark chocolate can make you feel happier.

