

Adolescent Nutrition

The Dark Truth about Chocolate

Dark chocolate has stirred up quite a buzz lately. Recent studies, funded in part by the chocolate industry, report that chocolate can protect your heart, and is a healthy food.

Here are a few tips to keep you on the right track as you incorporate chocolate into your healthy diet.

- Flavanols are a photochemical found in cocoa solids. The darker the chocolate, the more Flavanols. Flavanols are being researched to find if they lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure. Bottom line, it is still too early to say whether chocolate is heart healthy
- Chocolate is Calorie dense. That is, it has a lot of Calories in just a little bit of Chocolate. Cocoa butter is the saturated fat in chocolate. This will be listed under saturated fat on the food label. This is what makes chocolate a Calorie dense food. An individual portion (1.3- 2.0 oz size) can be up to 300 Calories and 12 g of Saturated Fat.
- Keep your portions small. Including 1 square of dark chocolate per day (60 Calories) can fit into a healthy diet.

Am. J. Clin. Nutr. 88: 38,2008.

Nutrition Action Healthletter, October 2008

Healthy Holiday Eating

Holiday parties frequently offer an abundance – or overabundance – of food choices, large portions and extra sweets.

Just because you're trying to eat healthfully doesn't mean you need to avoid celebrations or accept a few extra party pounds. The secret is moderation and balance.

With some forethought, you can enjoy any holiday gathering and keep a healthy perspective:

Eat small frequent meals throughout the day prior to the party

Drink a glass of milk or eat a piece of fruit beforehand

Make just one trip to the party buffet

Fill up on fruits, veggies and grain foods

Limit cookies, cakes and other holiday treats to smaller portions

Alternate Calorie containing beverages with Calorie free drinks.

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Fight off the Cold and Flu

As the cold months of winter begin to settle in, so does the cold and flu season. Staying healthy may be your best defense to help ward off illness.

Cold and flu bugs are viral illnesses and the best way to avoid them is to eat healthfully. Pack your daily eating plan with nutrient-rich foods like fruits and vegetables. These foods contain phytonutrients and may help enhance immunity.

In addition to eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of rest and keeping your hands clean and away from your face can also help you avoid the cold and flu this season.

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Fall Sports Require Fuel

The fall school sports training schedule is well under way and athletes need to focus on consuming adequate amounts of calories, carbohydrates, protein and water.

Teenage athletes need enough calories to maintain their growth and an additional amount to accommodate their working muscles. Spreading meals throughout the day is a good way to get the fuel you need.

Also, plan your meals around carbohydrates and protein. Good food choices include:

- Peanut butter and whole-grain bread

- Sliced turkey in a whole-wheat pita

- Whole-wheat pasta topped with baked chicken

- Scrambled eggs and whole-wheat toast.

Add fruits, vegetables and dairy foods to all meals and snacks to round out your nutritional benefits and your training needs.

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