

CHOCOLATE LOWERS BLOOD PRESSURE!

Confection's compounds rival results of meds

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HERE'S some sweet news — experts say chocolate may be as good for your heart as high blood pressure medication! In a first-of-its-kind study, researchers at the U.K.'s University of Surrey found cocoa flavanols lowered blood pressure and reduced arterial stiffness — but only among people exhibiting hypertension!



Scientists say the discovery could pave the way for the bioactive compounds to be used in clinical practice!

“High blood pressure and arterial stiffness increase a person’s risk of heart disease and stroke, so it is crucial we investigate innovative ways to treat such conditions,” says Dr. Christian Heiss, a professor of cardiovascular medicine at the university.

The team’s study involved 11 healthy participants who consumed, on alternating days, either six cocoa flavanol capsules or six placebo capsules. Measurements of blood pressure and arterial stiffness were taken before consumption and every 30 minutes for the first three hours 60 minutes for nine hours. Researchers found readings reduced for participants only if blood pressure levels were high prior to taking the supplement. There was no effect when blood pressure was initially low.

The scientists also note the positive effects lasted eight hours, which they attribute to the way gut bacteria metabolizes cocoa flavanols. While more testing is needed, the “positive impact cocoa flavanols have on our cardiovascular system is undeniable,” says Heiss. “Doctors often fear some blood pressure tablets can decrease blood pressure too much on some days.

“What we found indicated cocoa flavanols only decrease blood pressure if it is elevated.” Still, experts warn against gorging on chocolate candy due to its high levels of sugar and fat! In addition, they say any use of flavanols should first be discussed with your doctor.

However, this isn’t the first time chocolate has been touted as having potential benefits. Previous studies found dark chocolate improves brain health, prevents mental decline and boosts mood, memory and immunity!