

Chocolate Decreases Risk of Atrial Fibrillation



Findings of a large study conducted with men and women in Denmark show that consuming moderate amounts of chocolate is associated with significantly lower risk of atrial fibrillation. The study was conducted by researchers at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and findings are published in *Heart*.

These findings add to the already accumulating evidence that moderate chocolate intake can be beneficial for health. Previous research also suggests that cocoa and cocoa-containing foods, especially dark chocolate, provide cardiovascular benefits. This may be due to their high content of flavanols which are known to promote healthy blood vessel function. However, till now there was no significant research available on the association between chocolate and atrial fibrillation (AF).

This study included 55,502 men and women who participated in the Danish Diet, Cancer and Health Study. Body Mass Index, blood pressure and cholesterol were measured and considered for all participants. Researchers also looked at health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease as well as diet and lifestyle.

Among the study participants, there were 3346 cases of AF over a 13.5 year follow-up period. Participants who consumed one to three servings of chocolate per month had a 10% lower rate of AF as compared to those who consumed a one-ounce serving of chocolate less than once per month. In addition, participants who ate one serving per week had a 17% lower rate while those who ate two to six servings per week had a 20% lower rate of AF. Similar results were observed for both men and women.

"Despite the fact that most of the chocolate consumed by the study participants likely had relatively low concentrations of potentially protective ingredients, we still observed a significant association between eating chocolate and a lower risk of AF--suggesting that even small amounts of cocoa consumption can have a positive health impact," said Elizabeth Mostofsky, instructor in the Department of Epidemiology at Harvard Chan School, a postdoctoral fellow at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and lead author of the study. "Eating excessive amounts of chocolate is not recommended because many chocolate products are high in calories from sugar and fat and could lead to weight gain and other metabolic problems. But moderate intake of chocolate with high cocoa content may be a healthy choice."

Source: [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#)

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