



Daily Allowance

1.6 ounces—that's 50 dark chips*

SIX BENEFITS

At any age, recent studies have shown, dark chocolate may:

1. Lower blood pressure by dilating blood vessels.
2. Reduce the risk of diabetes by reducing blood sugar and insulin.
3. Activate enzymes that eliminate cancer-causing carcinogens and mutagens.
4. Reduce the risk of blood clots and strokes by inhibiting the clumping of blood platelets.
5. Keep cholesterol levels stable or even slightly improve them.
6. Enhance cognitive function by increasing blood flow in the brain.

MORE ANTIOXIDANTS

Many foods—notably fruits and vegetables—are rich in antioxidants, which mop up molecules in the body that damage cells and hasten aging and disease.

WINNER: dark chocolate

RUNNER-UP: pecans (14 percent less than winner)

CROWD PLEASER: glass of red wine (25 percent less than winner)



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BITTER IS BEST

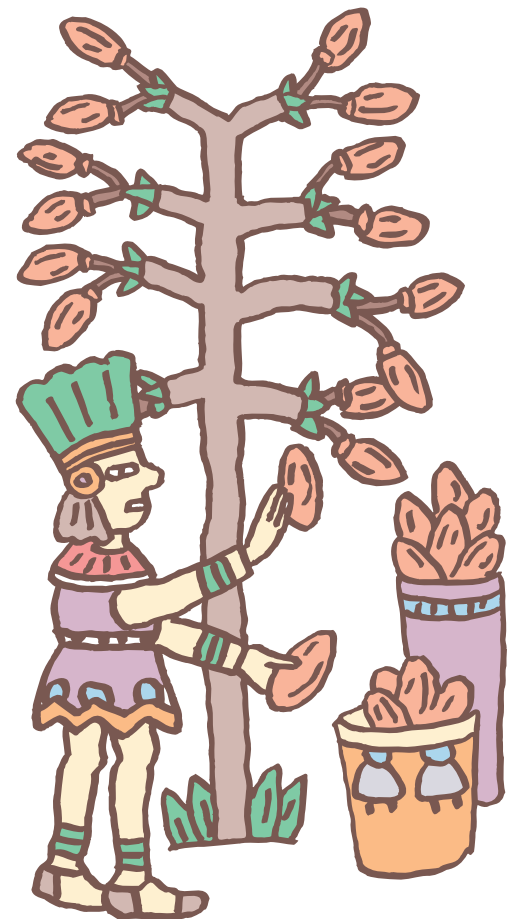
Cocoa beans are processed into cocoa solids and cocoa butter. The solids contain the antioxidants. The higher the percentage of cocoa content listed on a wrapper, the more antioxidants inside.

The purest commercial varieties, like unsweetened baking chocolate, taste bitter, which means that most chocolate consumed contains sugar. Most ingredients added to chocolate raise its caloric and fat content and lower its antioxidants. Milk chocolate also contains milk powder or condensed milk, which may interfere with the absorption of antioxidants. "White chocolate" contains cocoa butter, sugar and milk but no cocoa solids—in other words, zero antioxidants.

Power of 50

1528

The cacao plant is indigenous to South America's Amazon region. The Maya first cultivated its beans 1,800 years ago. Spanish explorer Hernan Cortes introduced cocoa to Europe in 1528. The plant made its way to Africa and Asia. Today Ivory Coast, Ghana and Indonesia supply more than 70 percent of the world's 8.2-million-ton annual cocoa bean harvest.



* Calculated for studies by Mary B. Engler, director of the Cardiovascular and Genomics Graduate Program in the School of Nursing at the University of California, San Francisco. These figures apply to healthy indulgers who also eat wisely and exercise regularly. Those with heart disease, diabetes, hypertension or weight concerns should limit their intake to two or three times a week.

