

Eating chocolate improves cognitive function, study finds

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Chocolate. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

People who ate chocolate at least once a week performed better on multiple cognitive tasks, compared to those who ate chocolate less frequently, according to a new study by researchers at the University of Maine, University of South Australia and Luxembourg Institute of Health that has garnered international attention.

With age, education, gender age and race controlled, cognitive tasks were related to following domains, each, measured by multiple tests: Visual-Spatial Memory and Organization, Working Memory, Abstract Verbal Reasoning, Scanning and Tracking, and overall cognitive functioning.

The research team—University of South Australia nutritionist and

psychologist Georgina Crichton; UMaine psychologist and epidemiologist Merrill "Pete" Elias; and cardiovascular researcher Dr. Ala'a Alkerwi of the Luxembourg Institute of Health—published their findings in the journal *Appetite*.

The 968 participants ages 23–98 in the study came from the Maine-Syracuse Longitudinal Study, directed by Elias, which has tracked more than 1,000 people over 35 years.

The researchers hypothesized that regular intake of cocoa flavanols may be one of several mechanism explaining the [cognitive benefits](#) of chocolate.

In addition, compared to those who never or rarely ate chocolate, those who ate chocolate weekly had higher total and LDL cholesterol, but lower glucose levels. Hypertension and Type 2 diabetes also were lower in regular chocolate consumers than in nonconsumers. But positive associations between [chocolate consumption](#) and cognitive performance remained with control for these variables, other risk factors for cardiovascular disease, and consumption of other food and beverages.

More information: Georgina E. Crichton et al. Chocolate intake is associated with better cognitive function: The Maine-Syracuse Longitudinal Study, *Appetite* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2016.02.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2016.02.010)

Provided by University of Maine

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