

The health benefits of dark chocolate

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Dark chocolate has been found to increase your sense of calmness and contentedness. Credit: Swinburne University of Technology

It's no secret that Australians love chocolate, with studies having shown an average of almost 5kg eaten per person per year.

With Easter fast approaching, it has been estimated that [chocolate consumption](#) during the period will account for a sizeable 3.6 per cent of the nation's total annual consumption.

And while some may fear the effect it will have on their waistline, research conducted at Swinburne in 2013 has concluded that chocolate can be good for you. In fact, the study found that the polyphenols in [dark chocolate](#) can increase your sense of calmness and contentedness.

Anecdotaly, chocolate is often linked to mood enhancement,"

Swinburne Research Fellow and lead author of the study, Dr Matthew Pase, said.

"This clinical trial was perhaps one of the first to scientifically demonstrate the positive effects of cocoa polyphenols on mood."

Seventy-two healthy men and women aged 40-65 years took part in the study, receiving a dark chocolate drink mix with 500mg, 250mg or 0mg of cocoa polyphenols, all presented in identical packages.

After 30 days, those who drank the high dose concentration of cocoa polyphenols reported greater calmness and contentedness than either of the other drink mixes.

So as you plough through this year's Easter eggs, stick to the dark [chocolate](#) ones if you're looking to relax.

The research was originally published in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*.

More information: Matthew P Pase et al. Cocoa polyphenols enhance positive mood states but not cognitive performance: a randomized, placebo-controlled trial, *Journal of Psychopharmacology* (2013). [DOI: 10.1177/0269881112473791](#)

Provided by Swinburne University of Technology

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