

Planning to Give Sweets to Your Sweetie? Some Types of Dark Chocolate a Little Healthier than Others

8 February 2010

(PhysOrg.com) -- Before buying that box of chocolates for your Valentine, it is important to understand the type of chocolate to buy if you are looking for health benefits, according to Brian Lindshield, Kansas State University assistant professor of human nutrition.

Lindshield said [dark chocolate](#) can be good for you -- but it depends on how the chocolate is processed.

"The whole idea behind chocolate being beneficial comes from the Kuna who live on a remote island off of Panama," Lindshield said. "The Kuna people have a unique diet, and one of the reasons scientists were interested in them is because they are one of the only populations that does not develop high blood pressure."

Generally, as Americans age, blood pressure rises, which results in many developing the chronic [high blood pressure](#) condition known as [hypertension](#), Lindshield said. However, when researchers studied the Kuna, they found that their blood pressure did not increase as they aged. Scientists also studied Kuna who had moved off the remote island to Panama City and found that after they moved, their blood pressure increased as they aged, more like most other populations in the world.

"Clearly, there was something that they were doing on the island that was resulting in lower blood pressure," Lindshield said. "What researchers found was the Kuna's cocoa consumption on the island was huge compared to when they moved off the island. We're not talking [chocolate](#), we're talking cocoa powder, which is super bitter."

That bitterness is due to compounds found in cocoa called flavinols which have been attributed

to lowering blood pressure, Lindshield said.

The problem with most chocolates, however, is that most of their flavinols are destroyed during processing. Lindshield said that Mars Candy Company has developed a processing method that retains the flavinols, resulting in some of its products that are more heart-healthy.

Provided by Kansas State University

APA citation: Planning to Give Sweets to Your Sweetie? Some Types of Dark Chocolate a Little Healthier than Others (2010, February 8) retrieved 28 November 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-02-sweets-sweetie-dark-chocolate-healthier.html>

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