Chocolate Lowers Inflammation and Heart Disease Risk! Transcript

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Chocolate and Heart Health Studies

I think chocolate lovers are going to like this one. There are two new meta-analyses of controlled trials looking at chocolate consumption and various markers related to heart health and inflammation.

The first one included 31 trials that used either cocoa extract or a minimum 70% cocoa or dark chocolate, which is rich in flavonoids. Doses and types varied, with some studies using pills with cocoa, others using chocolate milk, and others chocolate bars, for example.

They found that the chocolate resulted in modest but significant reductions in total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol blood glucose and blood pressure compared to products that were low in flavonoids.

However, they also did what's called a subgroup analysis and they found those participants who were less healthy to begin with were more likely to see benefits while those who are already quite healthy didn't see much benefit.

And they didn' t note any significant effects on body composition, triglycerides, HDL-cholesterol and hemoglobin A1C. But also noteworthy, didn t identify any clear negative effects.

And the second meta-analysis looked at 33 trials evaluating various markers of inflammation and oxidative stress. Overall, they found that dark chocolate could lower MDA, which is a marker of oxidated stress, and could increase nitric oxide which helps arteries to dilate, promoting blood flow.

They also found that in studies with higher doses of flavonoids, there was a reduction in CRP levels, which is a marker of inflammation. But there were no clear effects in the studies that used lower doses.

So these results may help explain how chocolate may lower the risk of cardiovascular disease, at least at a moderate intake of about a square or two per day.