

# Cocoa Flavanols are Your Heart's Best Friend!



*Chocolate joins the pantheon of functional foods like tea, berries, and coffee—I obtain a mental and physical performance edge with my daily intake of cocoa flavanols.*

*With Heart Health Month officially underway, there's no better time to indulge in heart-healthy dark chocolate! Here's a concise list of its benefits from our friends at FlavaNaturals.*

*—Dr. Ronald Hoffman*

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It sounds too good to be true, but the data from Harvard, Columbia, and other research institutions are clear. Cocoa flavanols deliver extraordinary cardio benefits! Can you think of another nutrient, supplement, or drug shown to reduce the

risk of cardiovascular death by 27% while also supporting exercise performance?

Flavanol benefits are so compelling that new U.S. dietary guidelines from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommend consuming 400 to 600mg of flavanols daily for improved cardiometabolic health, including lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. The guidelines are based on 157 controlled studies! Benefits of flavanols on brain function, generally seen with 500mg to 1,000mg daily, are beyond the scope of the current guidelines.

Cardio benefits of cocoa flavanols are far-reaching! Here is a look at the benefits and supporting scientific evidence:

**Decrease Risk of Heart Attack, Stroke, and Death:** Harvard Medical School's massive 21,400-person, five-year, placebo-controlled study of daily cocoa flavanol consumption (500mg) is one of the largest controlled studies of any nutrient, supplement, or drug of all time! And the results are even more impressive:

- 27% reduction in the risk of cardiovascular death (jumps to 39% in participants consuming cocoa flavanols at least 22 days per month!)
- 24% reduction in major cardiovascular events (heart attack, stroke, or death) among study participants consuming cocoa flavanols daily

**Lower Blood Pressure and Cholesterol:** Nearly 1 in 2 American adults have high blood pressure or cholesterol, primary risk factors for cardiovascular disease that can impact our wellness and longevity.

Flavanols can help. Numerous controlled studies of cocoa flavanols show meaningful reductions in both blood pressure and LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol), while simultaneously raising HDL (good cholesterol) levels.

**Reduce Blood Sugar:** We all know that too much sugar consumption and high blood sugar can be detrimental to our health. In fact, high blood sugar is associated with an increased risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and depression. Not to mention weight gain, low energy, and skin problems...

Four well-controlled studies show that cocoa flavanols lower blood sugar and improve insulin resistance in people without diabetes. In fact, these studies show an average reduction in glucose levels of over 10%, and an average improvement in

insulin resistance of nearly 40%!

**Improve Circulation:** Cocoa flavanols have a robust effect on how much your arteries can flex to accommodate blood flow. Studies have shown that daily consumption of 900mg of cocoa flavanols increases this 'flow-mediated dilation' by more than 25% across a range of ages!

How do they do it? By increasing nitric oxide production. Nitric oxide helps keep arteries open, elastic, and healthy. (Plaques that build up in our arteries have exactly the opposite effect!)

**Support Exercise Performance:** Did you know your arteries and vessels expand every time you climb a flight of stairs, go for a run, or grab a workout? And did you know cocoa flavanols increase your artery flexibility to support the delivery of incremental oxygen and nutrients during physical exertion?

The process whereby your arteries expand is called vasodilation. And vasodilation is super important during exercise for the following reasons:

- Increases the delivery of nutrients and oxygen to working muscles
- Raises the lactic acid production threshold
- Supports muscle fibers with the oxygen and nutrients to repair efficiently

Cocoa flavanols are nature's perfect vasodilator – super healthy and delicious!