Lose 10% More Weight By Eating A Chocolate Bar Every Day

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Editor's Note: This article reports on a study later revealed to have been conducted by an unqualified researcher who manipulated the statistics in order to produce a significant result. It was published in a journal that doesn't peer-review its research. We regret the error. There is legitimate research on the benefits of chocolate, but this study doesn't qualify.

Want to lose weight faster? Eat dark chocolate. That's right, the same delicious bar that we know is packed with healthy antioxidants just keeps getting better: It's now a promising weight-loss aid, according to findings published last week in the International Archives of Medicine.

Dark chocolate has enjoyed a health halo for years now, thanks to its rich supply of plant compounds called flavonoids, powerful antioxidants shown to lower bad cholesterol and high blood pressure, boost serotonin and endorphin levels in the brain, and more. But until now, no one had tested how its particular cocktail of bioactive compounds might enhance weight loss in humans. (There was one mouse study showing that when rodents added high-cocoa content chocolate to a high-fat diet, they were able to stay slim.)

To explore the role that dark chocolate might play in human dieting, researchers from the nonprofit Institute of Diet and Health in Meinz, Germany, put participants on one of three diets—low carb, low carb plus about 1.5 ounces of dark (81%) chocolate per day, or a control group that stuck to their usual diet. Three weeks later, the low-carb group had shed weight compared to the control group as expected, but the chocolate group had dropped 10% more weight than their low-carb counterparts.

"I was surprised that the chocolate group lost more weight," says study author Johannes Bohannon, research director of the nonprofit Institute of Diet and Health. "I was amazed to see weight coming off people 10% faster just because they were eating a bar of chocolate each day."

The chocolate eaters also continued slimming down in the weeks that followed, even as the low-carb dieters crept back to their previous weight. Better still, the chocolate group reported quality-of-life improvements such as better sleep in addition to significantly lowered blood cholesterol.

It's unclear at this point exactly how chocolate works its weight-loss magic. "Cocoa contains many bioactive compounds that may be the cause," Bohannon says. "It's already known that cocoa has a strong effect on the brain's reward system in many people, so it could be a subtle effect related to the interaction between mind and body, or it could be a purely metabolic mechanism." Only further experiments will tell.

In the meantime, to take advantage of what the researchers call "weight loss turbo," help yourself to a single serving of dark (at least 80% cocoa) chocolate along with a standard low-carb diet to help you lose weight faster and keep it off longer. But be patient: In the study, the slimming effects took a week or two to kick in.