

Do you Like Choc-A-Lot?

Easter is a time we love to indulge in chocolate! Many of us may have given up chocolate for lent, or simply just want a little treat. Chocolate becomes more available to us in the form of Easter eggs and easter themed treats. When looking for easter products, we recommend looking for “gluten free” labelled products or you can check the Coeliac Society Easter Goodie list 2023 to see if a product is suitable.

Chocolate comes from cacao, a plant with high levels of minerals and antioxidants. Antioxidants are compounds that may protect your cells from free radicals, which have been linked to heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses.

There are three main types of chocolate, dark, milk and white. Dark chocolate has the highest proportion of cacao solids, between 60-90%.

Benefits of Dark Chocolate

The higher the cocoa content, the more benefits. Most of the health benefits are associated with chocolate with at least a 70% cacao content, as these contain the most nutrients and antioxidants.

Dark chocolate is high in minerals such as iron, magnesium, copper and zinc. (1) (2) Iron is an important mineral and often individuals with coeliac disease lack iron. Incorporating a little dark chocolate into the diet is a nice way to get a little boost of iron. However, there is not enough iron in chocolate and should not be a replacement for other dietary sources of iron. It also contains some amount of fibre, which again can be considered by those who may want an increase of fibre in their diets. Some studies have shown that

dark chocolate improves blood flow and reduces blood pressure (3) (4), it may also reduce the risk of heart disease (5) (6).

Nutrient Profile of Dark Chocolate

100g of dark chocolate (70-84%) contains:

- 65% of recommended intakes of Iron
- 30% of recommended intakes of Zinc
- 54% of recommended intakes of Magnesium
- 11g of Fibre

Important to Remember

Chocolate is high in calories, sugar, and saturated fat content. Though dark chocolate has some health benefits, this does not mean you should consume 100g of dark chocolate daily. Additionally, the processing methods may differ between manufactures and therefore can alter the antioxidant contents.

Overall, indulging in a chocolate treat every now and then shouldn't be associated with guilt, whether it is nutrient and antioxidant rich dark chocolate or white chocolate, which has little nutritional benefit. There are many healthy ways to incorporate chocolate into your lifestyle (i.e. adding a square or two into your porridge in the mornings or enjoying it along side a snack such as nuts or fruit). As with most foods, chocolate can be enjoyed in moderation as part of a varied balanced diet.