

Moderate chocolate consumption lowers heart failure risk Study

Middle-aged and elderly Swedish women who regularly ate a small amount of chocolate had low risks of heart failure risks, in a study reported in *Circulation: Heart Failure*, a journal of the American Heart Association.

The nine-year study, conducted among 31 823 middle-aged and elderly Swedish women, looked at the relationship of the amount of high-quality chocolate the women ate, compared to their risk for heart failure. The quality of chocolate consumed by the women had a higher density cocoa content somewhat like dark chocolate by American standards. In this study, researchers found:

- Women who ate an average of one to two servings of the high-quality chocolate per week had a 32% low risk of developing heart failure.
- Those who had one to three servings per month had a 26% lower risk.
- Those who consumed at least one serving daily or more didn't appear to benefit from a protective effect against heart failure.

The lack of a protective effect among women eating chocolate every day is probably due to the additional calories gained from eating chocolate instead of more nutritious foods, said Murray Mittleman, M.D., Dr.P.H. lead researcher of the study.

"You can't ignore that chocolate is a relatively calorie-dense food and large amounts of habitual consumption is going to raise your risks for weight gain," said Mittleman, director of the Cardiovascular Epidemiology Research Unit at Harvard Medical School's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centre in Boston. "But if you're going to have a treat, dark chocolate is probably a good choice, as long as it's in moderation."