

Dark Chocolate and Pistachios: The Power Snack Duo that Fights Inflammation and Heart Disease

By: PF Louis, Natural News

Snacking on pistachios and dark chocolate for heart health? Hand them over! It's hard to imagine a tastier duo.

And the science confirming this is in for both snack treats individually. But it shouldn't require further clinical research to grasp that combining them offers even more protection against cardiovascular disease (CVD). It's a no-brainer.

The dark chocolate study

There have been a few recent studies confirming cacao and dark chocolate's positive influence on cardiovascular health. Some of them were funded by Barry Callebaut's Swiss based international company, *Callebaut Chocolate*, to obtain legal authorization for promoting chocolate as a health food (<http://www.naturalnews.com>).

But the earliest may have been the Italian study reported in the October 2008 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition*. This test measured levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) blood levels among groups who ate no chocolate against those who did.

CRP is a protein marker produced by the liver that indicates inflammation is occurring throughout the body as the CRP count increases. The CRP blood test is used as an early warning for cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The 2008 Moli-sani Project in Italy used 4,849 regional residents for general research to determine genetic and environmental factors that develop cancer and heart disease.

The researchers identified 824 subjects who ate dark chocolate regularly showing lower CRP levels than 1,317 who never ate chocolate.

Senior research author Dr. Licia Iacoviello stated, "The lowering of CRP that we saw corresponds to a shift from medium risk of cardiovascular disease to low risk and is the first time an association between consumption of dark chocolate and inflammation has been found in a population study."

The decrease in CRP was at its best among those averaging 20 grams, just under an ounce, of consumption every three days. However, it was noticed that increased consumption brought about a reversal in decreasing CRP.

The researchers' opinion was perhaps the increase in lipids (fats) and sugars in chocolate processed from cacao or cocoa for semi-sweet or dark chocolate countered the cacao benefits.

Solution: Have a bag of cacao nibs handy with your pistachios. Unsweetened cacao nibs are available as a bulk item from Whole Foods and a few other stores or online.

Now for those pistachios

Nuts, especially almonds and walnuts, contain beneficial fatty acids for heart health. Various trials have confirmed this. However, little or no research has checked into the cardiovascular benefits of pistachios until a 2008 study recorded in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Twenty-eight subjects demonstrating certain CVD risk factors were put on a four week low fat controlled diet that included one serving of pistachios daily to compare against a low fat diet without pistachios for the same time period of four weeks, then again with a double serving of pistachios.

The pistachio group had reduced CVD risk factors or markers with increased metabolic lipid resolution. Doubling the pistachio dose increased the risk factor reduction.

That study was entitled "Effects of pistachios on cardiovascular disease risk factors and potential mechanisms of action: a dose-response study 1,2,3."

Whenever you look over a study abstract or full text located in the sources below, realize that they will all be somewhat inconclusive, using language preceded by "may" and concluded with "further research to determine mechanisms."

But we can make our own conclusions with gratitude for the research done without putting more researchers to work. Pass the cacao nibs and pistachios, please.

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.vitasearch.com/get-clp-summary/37741>