Potential Health Benefits of Cocoa's Anti-Inflammatory Action

By nhiondemand.com

Cocoa beans grow on the Theobroma cacao tree, which is found in Southeast Asia, Hawaii, Brazil and other South American countries. Cocoa beans are harvested, dried and roasted and then crushed into chocolate liquor. This liquor is then pressed to remove most of the cocoa butter and the remainder is further processed to become unsweetened cocoa powder. Cocoa contains fat, carbohydrates, antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and other compounds. Cocoa phenols have been found to prevent LDL (bad) cholesterol from plague buildup in the arteries, thereby, reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

A study published in the journal Nutrition, Metabolism and Cardiovascular Diseases investigated the potential health benefits of cocoa consumption through its anti-inflammatory actions. The researchers enrolled 18 healthy volunteers who were randomly assigned to 3 different groups for 3 weeks: 40g of cocoa powder with milk, with water and only milk. Results were both cocoa groups experienced decreased levels of intercellular adhesion molecule 1 (ICAM-1), which is supposed to play a role in the early development of heart disease. From these findings, the researchers concluded that “The anti-inflammatory effect of cocoa intake may depend on the bioavailability of bioactive compounds and may be mediated at least in part by the modulation of NF-κB activation and downstream molecules reinforcing the link between cocoa intake and health.”1

1 Vazquez-Agell M, Urpi-Sarda M, Sacanella E, et al. Cocoa consumption reduces NF-κB activation in peripheral blood mononuclear cells in humans. Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis. Aug2011.