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Chocolate Fix™: Yummy and Healthy! Health Benefits of Dark Chocolate and Coconut Oil

by **Henriette Alban, ND**

Who doesn't love chocolate?!

Who doesn't love the taste of very good chocolate? And while the dark kind, with 60-85% cocoa content, has all the research, the organic, fair traded, raw cocoa based chocolate is a relatively new popular item on the shelves. 'Black chocolate', as I called it growing up in Switzerland, was always a delicacy for those who didn't mind its bitterness and even loved it. Cocoa and dark chocolate don't lack for studies and beneficial findings from its LDL lowering capacity to increased (although they don't know quite why) and improved blood circulation and much more. But cocoa has lots of benefits.



Benefits of Cocoa

Cocoa is also high in magnesium and offers the body a healthy synergy of different nutrients. Among these healthy nutrients are polyphenols and procyanidins, referred to as the magical antioxidant powers that help us fight free radicals. Chocolate's ORAC values exceed even many fruits and berries.

We're talking about real chocolate, again the dark kind - the one with at least 60% raw cocoa powder - not the kind that is processed with alkali to take out the bitterness, which also removes the polyphenols. Nor is it the kind that is mixed with white sugar and milk, which totally defeats the purpose and turns chocolate into a fattening candy food that is neither comparable to the raw cocoa product nor beneficial to health.

Xooma's new magical product, Chocolate Fix, is made from raw cocoa and from organic cocoa, carefully selected to arrive at its wonderful blend of taste and benefits. There is very little that you can't do using this cocoa powder mix. It's rather impressive how long the raw cane sugar holds its place, so you can stretch one portion for those who don't like it too sweet.

Chocolate Fix Recipe book

There is also the Chocolate Fix recipe promotion going on that has been extended to January 15th. Not only will there be a random drawing of winners, all the recipes sent in will be placed into a Chocolate Fix Recipe booklet that will be made available as a free download from Xooma's website. While I've been hearing about some different ways of using Chocolate Fix, I've enjoyed the plain use of this powder mix with a bit of water or various milks. It's rich AND it's satisfying for those who respond to the brain clearing it offers – due to its small caffeine content – a great side effect. Suddenly it feels like everyone on our gift list would want this! They'd all love this little treat... So why not spread the deliciousness around.

In a bit, I'll talk about how many ways you can use this Chocolate Fix. But first, let's take a quick look at the many benefits we derive by enjoying this raw cocoa powder mix.



The Mayans and Cocoa

The Mayans used cocoa in medicinal and ritual applications, and when we look at how they processed their cocoa beans, we can see that there are many steps, one of which may be to add lots of bananas to help sweeten the generally bitter brew. After their processing the cocoa powder was made into blocks that could be stored. If we take a closer look at how chocolate is made today, it's a complex development involving many different steps.

The Bitter Truth

The **Good news** is flavanoids also may reduce inflammation, and the proliferation of dangerous free radicals produced in regular cell metabolism.

The **Bad news** is at this stage, cocoa powder remains quite bitter. As a result, it's often processed by treatment with alkali — most commonly sodium bicarbonate, or baking soda — to make it darker, less acidic, and easier to mix into beverages. Unfortunately, this 200-year-old method, also known as "Dutch-processing," has been shown to destroy the active flavanol content by as much as 80%.

Thus, the percentage of cacao contained in a piece of chocolate, whether it's 60%, 70% or higher, is no indication of its flavanol content, argues Hollenberg in a 2007 editorial in the journal 'Circulation'. He and other nutrition researchers have argued for labeling chocolate products with flavanol values instead.

How Cocoa is harvested and processed

Beans are pulled out of the large fruit pod they grow in, similar in size to a small honeydew melon. The content look a bit slimy, white coated beans. They are pulled out by hand and set out to ferment under tarps for a few days. Through the naturally occurring heat, the fermentation process slowly liquefies the slime and fluids drain away. The cocoa beans, now free of pulp and liquid, turn their brown color, become less acidic and develop their chocolate taste. Next the cocoa beans are spread on large trays to dry in the sun for about a week. Afterwards the now dried beans can easily be broken apart to reveal their dark powdery richness. After selecting the beans according to size and dryness, the selected product is now free of mold, and pod remnants and any other debris is then moved to large sacks and sold for export to chocolate makers.

Since raw cocoa, organically grown, carefully harvested and gently processed is not the same base material for all studies, it seems difficult to accurately come to an agreement. What we do know though is that Chocolate Fix is made from good source materials and as such you can take the beneficial aspects of the studies and assume that it will work for you, too.

The Benefits of Flavanols

"In a new study, a team from Harvard University randomly assigned 60 elderly people to drink two cups of flavanol-rich or flavanol-poor cocoa every day for a month. Flavanols are a type of polyphenol, which are antioxidants found in foods like cocoa, tea, berries, and wine. Foods rich in these compounds have been shown to benefit heart and brain health in the past. The problem with many earlier studies is that they've asked people to recall their intake of the various foods over the years, which can be unreliable, rather than randomly assigning them specific foods to eat in the present."

"The participants were tested for memory and thinking skills before and after the cocoa intervention, and given a form of ultrasound that measures blood flow in the brain. There weren't any overall differences between the high- and low-flavanol groups in terms of cognitive abilities, so the researchers looked a little deeper.

They found that people who had compromised blood flow to the brain and white matter damage at the beginning of the study *did* show a difference after drinking the cocoa for a month: Blood flow in their brains improved by about 8%, and the time it took them to complete a working memory test dropped from 167 seconds to 116 seconds.”

Even though tests for specific physical functions, involving raw cocoa or very dark chocolate show great promise, it is advised that we use moderation as in all things. And while our Chocolate Fix is designed as a healthful treat, it's not intended to be consumed in excess. You'll need to figure out what amount is right for you.



Cocoa is a stimulant and in its clean form **does** contain helpful polyphenols. Cocoa is also rich in the neuro transmitter anandandine (in Sanskrit Ananda means bliss), which may account for the euphoric or “I’m in love” kind of feeling women have experienced when eating chocolate. It adds this sense of satisfaction, allowing us to relax and enjoy, and to feel a bit euphoric even if nothing else special is going on. As for kids, you will know when your children are so hyper that they can’t settle down – giving them treats like that at bedtime is probably not a great idea, LOL!

By the same token, while I would rather you take Xooma’s Adult Superfood when you need some energy, if all you have available is Chocolate Fix, it can’t hurt you to use it and shore up some cocoa energy for your tasks at hand.

Introducing Coconut Oil

While coconut oil is listed as a smaller ingredient in the Chocolate Fix than the actual cocoa, this is an excellent opportunity to elaborate on this miracle super food.

Coconut oil is liquid at temperatures of 76° and above and becomes solid below that. Usually in your kitchen, unless you keep it very cold or very hot, Coconut oil will remain in a soft solid state. This way it melts easily for frying and/or to spread over steamed vegetables. You can use it in place of butter, for a spread, for baking, cooking, and to eat raw. In fact there is an interesting practice called “oil pulling” where you take about 1 tablespoon of coconut oil and holding it in your mouth for about 20 minutes, you push and pull it through your teeth, swish it around your mouth to combat any number of bacteriologically active problems. Why not brighten your smile, make your mouth happy and healthy with this entirely naturally healthy and deliciously tasting and smelling substance. Coconut has its own preservative systems, requires no refrigeration and is anti-viral, anti-bacterial, and anti-fungal. It’s an amazing and versatile oil that has only gained in popularity over recent years.



Cooking with Coconut

When cooking with coconut, it can lose its flavor after it’s heated. Although if you are careful when making scrambled eggs with it, and keep the eggs soft, that by adding a smaller amount of oil before removing the eggs from the pan it will help keep the flavor alive. Or for the times when you don’t want the flavor, it will dissipate easily while your food is cooking.

In the raw food world, coconut has become a seriously important ingredient. Not only is it a natural vegan fat, but it has so many great qualities due to its softened and then hardened states, it’s great for mixing with ground nuts, cocoa powder and ground coconut flesh. And of course with Chocolate Fix, it has become all but indispensable! I know I wouldn’t want to be without it.

Coconuts grow in many parts of the world. One of the largest suppliers for the North American market is Thailand. Coconut oil is extracted from the pulp after it's been sun-dried for about a week. Extraction of oil from copra (the dried meat) is one of the oldest seed-crushing industries of the world. The many benefits of coconut oil exceed any other substance I know of.

We know that Coconut oil contains an idea ratio of Omega 3 to Omega 6 = 3:1. The other oil with this quality is Hemp seed oil, but avoid heating that one as it will spoil its nutrients. By avoiding all the other oils and focusing on Coconut oil, cold pressed hemp seed oil, cold pressed olive oil and, when you can get it, raw butter from the milk of grass-fed cows, you have your fat needs covered. In combination these oils ascertain your natural blood clotting abilities, help clean your arteries, make your digestive system into a smooth passage and supply you with ample Vitamin K2, which Dr. Weston Price calls the X-factor, a substance amply found in the oldest populations on the planet, whose lifestyle led them to longevity and a high quality of life, even at 100 years old.



Author and nutritionist,
Mary Enig, Ph.D.

In a talk given at the 36th meeting of COCOTECH, Mary Enig, PhD and an important contributing member and consultant at the Weston Price Foundation, points out that:

“As a functional food, coconut has fatty acids that provide both energy (nutrients) and raw material for antimicrobial fatty acids and monoglycerides (functional components) when it is eaten. Desiccated coconut is about 69% coconut fat, as is creamed coconut. Full coconut milk is approximately 24% fat. Approximately 50% of the fatty acids in coconut fat are lauric acid. Lauric acid is a medium chain fatty acid, which has the additional beneficial function of being formed into monolaurin in the human or animal body. Monolaurin is the antiviral, antibacterial, and antiprotozoal monoglyceride used by the human or animal to destroy lipid-coated viruses such as HIV, herpes, cytomegalovirus, influenza, various pathogenic bacteria, including listeria monocytogenes and helicobacter pylori, and protozoa such as giardia lamblia. Some studies have also shown some antimicrobial effects of the free lauric acid.”

Coconut Oil and Benefits for the Body

Coconut oil is also great for dry skin, even baby's bottoms, and bodies, for nursing mothers whose nipples can crack and dry. And while applying coconut oil, we are sure it's not interfering with the nursing baby's health in any way. Coconut oil applied on the body after a shower or bath leaves you feeling healthy and clean, and even feet and heels are smooth and soft. Damaged hair responds well to the nourishing qualities of coconut oil and of course, it's a great massage oil. Now that we're in the cold season, at least in our hemisphere, if you are sensitive to cold, an application of coconut oil on dry warm skin heats you up even further. By actively rubbing your arms, you will feel warmed up in no time. And for our friends in Australia, there is nothing more soothing than using coconut oil after a sun bath or to counter the drying qualities of sea water after a great surf or swim.

So if you have been on the fence about coconut oil, you may want to try this wonderfully healthy and tasty product. Seek out high quality suppliers for better quality and competitive pricing.

Cool Chocolate Fix Combos

So let's take a look at the many fun combinations in which you can use Xooma's Chocolate Fix. Here is my version of a hot chocolate drink. Very simply prepared, just add about ¾ cup of organic coconut milk (canned) to the slight slurry I made with a bit of water from the powder. This way it can be heated, or just as easily be served cold, as well as made thicker or thinner.



Try adding Chocolate Fix as a chocolate sauce to fresh raspberries, and if you make it thicker you can use it as a chocolate dip for fresh strawberries. And who has not heard of chocolate fondue with its myriad of fruits and more to dip into the warm chocolate delight?



Or mix the slurry with softened warmed coconut oil, spread that mix over a cookie sheet (not making it too thin), and set the tray in the freezer for a couple of hours. Experiment with how that works for you by checking the flat sheet of the mix and cutting it into squares. They have to be served cold and eaten cold before the coconut oil melts. The cocoa slurry held in the frozen coconut oil makes for a crunchy “in the mouth melting” treat. I’m not sure how to assign a ratio, so I leave it to your own powers of invention.



One morning I placed one packet of Chocolate Fix in the blender, added ¼ cup of water and added about ¾ to 1 cup of organic coconut milk. Then I added a heaping tablespoon of previously frozen raspberries with their own sauce and blended it. And since I’m a fan of Lacuma powder, I added one teaspoon which made it nice and thick.

Chocolate Fix is the right mix for you

However you look at it, Chocolate Fix is a healthy and tasty treat for the whole family. With all the health benefits the ingredients offer to the versatility of the product, you are now armed with some great knowledge about Chocolate Fix. So place your order – and try out your own combinations to determine what you like best.

Happy Chocolating,
Henriette Alban, ND



As a Naturopathic Doctor and one of Xooma's most knowledgeable product experts, Dr. Henriette Alban knows how to help people gain a better understanding of their body's many health needs and how to support those needs.

