

Forget aspirin, try chocolate: Eating for pleasure lessens pain, says new research

BY ROSEMARY BLACK
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Thursday, October 15th 2009, 4:00 AM



Scholey/Getty

More fun than taking Advil: eating or drinking just about anything, actually, seems to lessen pain, according to a new study.

Next time your head's pounding, you may want to resist the urge to pop a painkiller and ask someone to please pass the chocolate instead. Research shows that the distraction of eating foods like chocolate for pleasure acts like a natural painkiller, according to the [London Daily Mail](#).

While the studies were done on animals, the scientists think the effect would be the same on people, according to the Daily Mail. Interestingly, plain water seemed to have the same effect, which led scientists to theorize that both food and drink can act as a painkiller in the absence of hunger and thirst. The study was published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*.

The rats in the experiments were fed either chocolate, sugar water or plain water while the floor of their cage was heated by a light bulb, according to the Daily Mail. They reacted to the heat by raising a paw, but were much slower to do so when they were eating or drinking.

[Dr. Peggy Mason](#) of [Chicago University](#) believes the findings might end the tradition of giving kids sweets to calm them when they go to the doctor, according to the Daily Mail. "Ingestion is a painkiller but we don't need the sugar," she says. "So replace the doctor's lollipop with a drink of water."

Its painkilling properties aside, chocolate can also act as an immune booster, says nutritionist [Christine Avanti](#), author of "Skinny Chicks Don't Eat Salad."

"It helps with immunity and high doses of cocoa can help defend against infection," she says.

But don't go crazy with milk chocolate, she says, as it's dark chocolate that has health benefits.

"When you mix milk into the chocolate, that reduces its antioxidant power," Avanti says.

She advises eating the chocolate straight up and as a small piece, very soon after a meal.

Her favorite way to eat chocolate? Shave it over a bowl of Greek yogurt, she suggests. But don't eat it between meals, Avanti advises. "I don't think it's a good idea to eat it by itself because that raises blood sugar levels and causes more hunger," she says.

Read more: http://www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/health/2009/10/15/2009-10-15_forget_asprin_try_chocolate_eating_for_pleasure_lessens_pain_says_new_research.html#ixzz0U2QgFMRU

