

## Dark chocolate calms nerves, enhances mood

National Business Review staff | Monday May 20, 2013 |



A new Australian study has found dark chocolate may increase calmness and contentedness through the polyphenols found in cocoa.

Polyphenols are found naturally in plants and are a basic component of the human diet. These compounds have been shown to reduce oxidative stress, which is associated with many diseases, and may also have beneficial psychological effects.

“Anecdotally, chocolate is often linked to mood enhancement,” Matthew Pase, a PhD candidate at the University of Swinburne in Melbourne and lead author of the study, says.

“This clinical trial is perhaps the first to scientifically demonstrate the positive effects of cocoa polyphenols on mood.”

The research was based on a randomised study involving 72 healthy men and women aged 40-65 years.

The participants each received a dark chocolate drink mix standardised to contain either 500mg of cocoa polyphenols, 250mg of cocoa polyphenols or none.

The drink mixes were given to participants in identical packaging so the investigators and participants were unaware of which treatment they were receiving. Participants drank their assigned drink once a day for 30 days.

After 30 days, those given the high dose concentration of cocoa polyphenols reported greater calmness and contentedness than those who drank either of the other drink mixes.

The researchers failed to find any evidence that cocoa polyphenols significantly improved cognitive performance. Only those who consumed the highest amount of polyphenols reported any significant positive effects.

Participants who consumed a moderate amount (250 mg a day) reported no significant effects.