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Chocolate and Wine: Love for Your Body?

Do your Valentine's plans include sweets for your sweetie? Make it dark chocolate and your treat could pack a health punch as well. A combined research team from Boston and Italy found that eating dark chocolate, 100 grams daily, was associated with lower blood pressure, lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol and improved insulin sensitivity. A gift from the heart – for the heart!

Making the Blood Flow

Peripheral artery disease (PAD) is a condition where the blood flow to the extremities is limited, resulting in weakness and pain. A study out of Italy has found that the consumption of just 40 grams of dark chocolate (>85% cacao) increased both how far and how long PAD sufferers could walk – within only 2 hours of being eaten. Milk chocolate did not provide these benefits, so go for the good stuff!

Love Wine!

In another example of the benefits of moderation, drinking red wine (anywhere from 2 glasses per month to 2 glasses per day) has been associated with up to a 50% reduction in the risk of developing cataracts, the cloudy patches that appear in the lens of the eye. Investigators in Iceland found the correlation in a 5 year study. Add a check to the "Pro" column for wine!

Probiotics & Wine

Many have heard of the health benefits of probiotics, the so-called "good" bacteria our bodies need for optimal health. Usually associated with dairy products, such as yogurt, Spanish researchers have found that wine can be a significant source as well. Unfortunately, the sulfating process for preserving wine kills these good bacteria, so the good stuff may have to be extracted before bottling.

Moderation. Many of the foods typically thought of as "bad" for you can be enjoyed in moderation – possibly with some actual health benefits. Your pharmacist can help define what moderation should be for you.