



# spotlight on health

## Heartening News About Chocolate

(NAPSA)—If you're like most chocolate lovers, one thing better than a sumptuous bite of rich chocolate is the news that it may even be good for you. A recent study suggests a link between eating certain kinds of chocolate and improved heart health.

The independent study, conducted at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) and published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* (JACN), suggests a potential link between compounds in cocoa, called flavanols, and improved blood vessel function. Blood vessel function is believed to be an important indicator of cardiovascular health, much like cholesterol levels or blood pressure.

Researchers compared the effects of eating a specific type of chocolate bar (Dove® Dark Chocolate; Mars, Incorporated) known to be high in flavanols with a flavanol-poor chocolate bar. Every day for two weeks, 21 healthy study participants consumed 46 grams of either the flavanol-rich bar or the flavanol-poor chocolate.

First, researchers tested the participants' blood at the beginning and end of the study to track flavanol absorption and found that the flavanols in the flavanol-rich chocolate were indeed absorbed. They then examined participants' blood vessel function by measuring how well the inner lining of the blood vessel is able to relax in response to increased blood flow by using a blood pressure cuff on the forearm.

The researchers found that those who ate the high-flavanol chocolate showed improved blood vessel function two hours after eat-



**The next time you indulge in chocolate, it may do your heart a bit of good.**

ing the chocolate. This kind of blood vessel elasticity is important to maintaining healthy blood flow and a healthy cardiovascular system.

"The exciting news here is that blood vessel dilation increased in subjects who ate this high-flavanol, commercially available chocolate product," said head researcher, Mary B. Engler, Ph.D., RN, professor of the Department of Physiological Nursing, University of California at San Francisco. "This is consistent with previous research suggesting that certain chocolates do contain enough flavanols to support cardiovascular health."

Even better news is that high-flavanol chocolate is easy to find. Not all chocolate retains flavanols because they can be lost during processing. One company developed proprietary processes to ensure that chocolate retains as many flavanols as possible. Those chocolate products are marked with the *Cocoapro*™ logo, and it can be found on both milk and dark chocolate products.

More information can be found at [www.cocoapro.com](http://www.cocoapro.com).