

The Hot Chocolate is Healthy for Our Brain

A new study conducted by Harvard University found that drinking just two cups of hot chocolate a day for 30 days brought about better blood circulation in the brain and higher scores at memory and cognitive test for mature people. Researchers found that memory and blood flow to the brain have a 'neurological and vascular connection'.

"We are learning more and more about the blood flow to the brain and its influence on cognitive thinking skills," says Dr. Sorond Farzaneh, of the Medical faculty. "When different areas in the brain need more energy to complete tasks, they need more blood. This relationship plays a very important role in various diseases and symptoms like Alzheimer's."

The study was published in the 'Neurology' journal and included about 60 people of ages 65 and up. Out of these, 18 had bad blood flow. Half of the participants drank hot cocoa rich with antioxidants, while the other half drank hot chocolate that is not particularly rich in antioxidants. However, after a month (in which the participants were not allowed to consume chocolate), those with bad blood flow experienced an 8.3% improvement in their blood flow (a big number when we're talking about health), with both types of cocoa having the same effect.

"From a medical standpoint," wrote the researchers, "the effect of hot chocolate on the blood vessels doesn't seem to be connected to antioxidants."



20 Easy Ways to Reduce Your Stress!

Stress and anxiety are some of the worst illnesses afflicting our modern times. Not only do they reduce our happiness and ability to enjoy our lives and our loved ones, but they are also the leading causes of many types of diseases and afflictions of the body, as well as the mind. So it is of paramount importance that we are all familiar with ways to reduce our overall, or momentary, stress. Here are 20 great and easy ways to reduce your stress and start feeling a whole lot better!

1. Take a deep breath. As simple as that sounds, deep breaths reduce the amount of cortisol, which can help release stress and anxiety. So next time you feel overwhelmed, take some deep breaths.
2. Meditation: The best thing about meditation is that it allows the brain to relax for a bit and so decreases the overthinking we do and the stress that comes with it. Give your mind a well needed break.
3. Retreat to your imagination: Imagine a peaceful scene, and let calm wash over you. If it doesn't work, imagine a happy memory of a time when you felt at ease.
4. Exercise: Not only does physical activity give a well needed release for your anger and frustration, the endorphins that are released after that activity help to drastically reduce the anxiety, as well as making you feel more powerful and in control.
5. Have sexual relations: Research shows that having sexual relations reduces the symptoms of stress and anxiety in a significant way.
6. Music: Studies show that listening to music can elevate stress by activating bio-chemical mechanisms in the brain responsible for controlling the amount of stress we feel.
7. Yoga: We'll say it again - yoga is great. The combination of breathing techniques and physical activity makes yoga one heck of a soldier in the fight against anxiety.
8. Walking: A quiet walk, especially at night, can do wonders for stress.
9. Talk to a loved one: Some people need to 'get it off their chest', and who better to talk to than someone who



is on your side. Maybe it's a partner, a great friend or a relative, but the interaction and closeness can do wonders.

10. Take a break: Take yourselves out of a stressing situation from time to time, don't slog it. The little times off will help you come back with renewed energy. Remember, you are not a machine, you need these little breaks.
11. Scented candles: Studies show that aromatherapy can be very effective against stress, and lavender scents have been directly linked to a decrease in overall stress.
12. A long, pampering massage: There's nothing like a good massage to take away all the combined stress in your muscles and let it go. Studies have shown that a 40 minute massage can do a lot to reduce stress in the body as well as improving our self-image. Ask your partner to massage you or pamper yourselves with a professional massage.
13. Get a pet: Statistics show that people who own pets are less stressed. One theory is that pets take us outside of the human world and the stress it creates, and make us forget about it for a while. After all, the world of a cat or a dog is a much nicer, calmer world, where licking and treats are much more important...