

Cocoa, not tea, calms blood pressure, study says

Chicago (Reuters) - Some may see a cup of tea as soothing but chocolate is more likely to lower one's blood pressure, German researchers reported on Monday.

Foods rich in cocoa appear to reduce blood pressure but drinking green and black tea may not, according to an analysis of previously published research in the Archives of Internal Medicine, published by the American Medical Association.

The drop in blood pressure among participants who consumed cocoa products for at least two weeks was in the same range as achieved by someone taking drugs commonly prescribed to control high blood pressure.

The fall in blood pressure credited to cocoa could be expected to reduce the risk of strokes and heart attacks by 10-20 percent, the report said.

Both cocoa and tea contain polyphenols, a class of chemicals known to help prevent

cardiovascular disease that are present in most fruits and vegetables. But cocoa has a different type than tea – procyanids – that appear to be more active.

Currently, patients with high blood pressure are urged to eat more fruits and vegetables, although cocoa and tea products account for the bulk of total polyphenol consumption in Western countries, the study said.

But don't start gobbling up chocolate bars just yet, wrote study author Dirk Taubert of the University Hospital of Cologne, Germany.

Treats such as dark chocolate might be substituted for other high-calorie desserts, based on the study's findings, but "we believe that any dietary advice must account for the high sugar, fat and calorie intake with most cocoa products.

"Rationally applied, cocoa products might be considered part of dietary approaches to lower hypertension risk," he wrote. □