

The benefits of chocolate during pregnancy

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In a study to be presented on Feb. 4 at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine's annual meeting, The Pregnancy Meeting, in Atlanta, researchers will present findings from a study titled, High-flavanol chocolate to improve placental function and to decrease the risk of preeclampsia: a double blind randomized clinical trial.

In light of previous studies showing conflicting results regarding the role of [chocolate consumption](#) during pregnancy and the risk of preeclampsia, this study set out to evaluate the impact of high-flavanol chocolate. Researchers conducted a single-center [randomized controlled trial](#) of 129 women with singleton pregnancy between 11 and 14 weeks gestation who had double-notching on uterine artery Doppler. The pregnant women selected were randomized to either high-flavanol or low-flavanol chocolate. A total of 30 grams of chocolate was consumed daily for 12 weeks and women were followed until delivery. Uterine artery Doppler pulsatility index was at baseline and 12 weeks after randomization. Preeclampsia, gestational hypertension, placenta weight, and birthweight were also evaluated.

The result was that there was no difference in [preeclampsia](#), gestational hypertension, [placental weight](#) or birthweight in the two groups; however, the uterine artery Doppler pulsatility index (a surrogate marker of blood velocity in the uterine, placental and fetal circulations) in both groups showed marked improvement that was much greater than expected in general population.

"This study indicates that chocolate could have a positive impact on

placenta and fetal growth and development and that chocolate's effects are not solely and directly due to flavanol content," explained Emmanuel Bujold, M.D., one of the researchers on the study who will present the findings. Dr. Bujold and Dr. Sylvie Dodin, principal investigator of the trial, are with the Université Laval Québec City, Canada.

Provided by Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

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